An Analysis of Identity-based and Security-oriented Russian Foreign Policy in Relation to Syria

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ABSTRACT

The civil war in Syria has become a culmination of the Arab Spring, which transformed into a complex international conflict, involving many states not only from the Middle East region, but also Russia, the US, and some EU states. From the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Russia played the key role in the conflict, starting from serving as a mediator of the conflict, and ending with active military actions initiated in 2015. Intensive discussion, and sometimes a rather negative discourse developed over Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria, which shaped a demand in an in-depth analysis of reasons behind Russian foreign policy decisions. Apart from historically strong ties with Syria, geopolitical and economic interests between two states still matter. At the same time it seems that in regards to Syria, Russian foreign policy has been mainly security-oriented, and simultaneously identity-based. A primary contribution of this thesis is offered by an application of a theoretical synthesis of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism for the Russian foreign policy analysis. It is argued that Neoclassic Realism provides a theoretical basis for explaining security-oriented Russian foreign policy in Syria, while Constructivist theory supports the argument that Russian foreign policy in Syria is also identity-based.

In case of Syria, domestic factors form an operational environment of Russian foreign policy-making. To Russia, the Syrian stability is seen as vital to the stability in the Middle East, and consequently to the Russia's national security and territorial integrity. In particular, Russia is concerned about the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in the Middle East, because this development could potentially give an impulse to further political opposition and intensify insurgencies in the Russian Muslim-populated regions. Apart from that, Russian foreign policy in Syria is also motivated

by the desire to sustain ' the Great Power' status by playing the key role in the Syrian crisis. This thesis is dedicated to the analysis of these developments, as well as their effects on Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria.

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CHAPTER I. INTRODUCTION

The Arab Spring started as series of peaceful demonstrations across the Middle Eastern states, however, soon the protests transformed into a violent civil war against dictatorship regimes ruled in those states for a long period of time. The political vacuum, which has become a result of the fall of authoritarian regimes, was quickly filled by the 'Islamist' parties. Overall, the Arab Spring marked a rise in 'Religious Extremist' activities.

The wave of protests reached Syria in March 2011, and by mid-summer, the conflict evolved into a violent war between the state's and opposition forces and turned into a humanitarian catastrophe for the civilian population. From the beginning of the civil war in Syria, Russia played the key role in mediating the crisis through diplomatic means, although in September 2015 contemplated a military intervention to the territory of Syria. With all this, there is perhaps a temptation to criticize Russian foreign policy approach as being unpredictable, irrational and volatile. Overall Russian foreign policy in Syria, as well as the decision to annex Crimea in 2014, brought Russia into a deep political crisis, with a subsequent anti-Russian discourse in the Western press and media. Such discourse, however, seems to result from lack of knowledge and understanding of the Russian history, Russian domestic and foreign policy-making culture and traditions. Therefore an in-depth analysis of these matters is necessary at the moment.

After careful analysis of the reasons behind Russian foreign policy in Syria, which include historical ties between two states, economic, geopolitical and military interests, it was decided that certain matters attracted particular attention in the Russian discourse on Syria. In particular, throughout the crisis, the Russian key political figures have been stressing the country's 'Greatpowerness' in the World

Politics in general and its importance in mediating the Syrian conflict in particular. Together with such discussions, a particular discourse was formed over a danger for the Russian national security and territorial integrity posed by the rise of 'Religious Extremism' during the Arab Spring and Syria in particular. Discourses reflected in a number of political speeches, statements and interviews of some key Russian political figures (mainly the President – Vladimir Putin and the Foreign Minister – Sergey Lavrov) on Russia's 'Great Power' identity and the threat of 'Religious Extremism' to the Russian domestic security and integrity, serve as tools in confirmations of the arguments that Russian foreign policy in Syria is identity-based and security-oriented.

The thesis rests on two arguments. In particular, it is argued that in Syria, Russian foreign policy is identity-based and security-oriented. Therefore the present research is aimed at answering two research questions:

1)   To what extent do domestic security implications form Russian foreign policy decision-making in relation to the Syrian conflict?

2)   What is the effect of the Russian national identity on its foreign policy in relation to Syria? In particular, how does the perception of 'Great Power' form Russian foreign policy-making in Syria?

A primary contribution of this thesis is laid in an analysis of Russian foreign policy in Syria through the scope of certain domestic matters, in particular through the Russia's identity and domestic security implications. When it comes to Russian foreign policy being security-based, it is explained through the logic of Neoclassic Realist approach, which, unlike other theories of Realism, argues for foreign and

domestic policies being interrelated. It is suggested that to Russia, the Syrian stability is seen as vital to the Middle East stability, and to the Russian national security and territorial integrity. In particular, Russia is concerned about the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in the Middle East, because according to official political discourse on this matter, such a rise in 'Religious Extremism' has a potential to destabilize Russia's predominantly Muslim-populated regions.

It is also argued that, together with being security-oriented, Russian foreign policy in Syria is simultaneously identity-based. By identity-based Russian foreign policy it is suggested that in Syria, Russia tries to pursue its 'exceptionalist' ideology. According to such ideology, Russia is trying to sustain its 'Great Power' identity and revive its leading status in the World Politics. Identity is the focus of the Constructivist theory, therefore it is applied to the research of the Russian national identity.

This thesis, however, is limited to the analysis of identity and security as two separate matters. Upon making a decision about research questions and arguments, it was also considered Russian identity being affected by certain domestic security matters. In connection with the present study, the Russian identity might be seen threatened by growing power of 'Religious extremism' in the Middle East and Russia in particular. As such 'Religious Extremism' might cause ethnical tensions in Russia, and threaten ethnic Russian population. In author's opinion, research on this matter has all chances to become a topic for a separate thesis, although it was decided on analysis of domestic security and identity as two independent developments affecting Russian foreign policy, and the evidence base in support of the choice was found through the historic continuity in such foreign policy-making in Russia.

In attempting to answer the research questions, the present study is built upon a large body of theoretical and empirical data. It needs to be said since this thesis is mainly targeted to the audience in the West (the US and the EU), therefore the use of primary sources in Russian was limited in order to avoid the language barrier for the targeted readers and subsequent confusion caused by translation of the sources used in this thesis. A literature review, as well as analysis of existing data, allows to reveal certain gaps in knowledge, which will be addressed and filled in during the work on the thesis. A literature review showed the following gaps:

- Within the large body of scholarly works, there is an implicit assumption that Russian foreign policy is largely the product of the external circumstances (Fox, 1959; Wolfers, 1962; Rosenau, 1966 and others), rather than the internal context. As such, interconnections and interrelationships between domestic and foreign contexts of Russian foreign policy seem to be under-analyzed, perhaps except for the research made by Tsygankov, Trenin and Snetkov. Therefore this research project is targeted at filling this gap with research findings and a theoretical approach used in this analysis;

- Literature on application of a theoretical pluralism in the foreign policy analysis is limited to the studies proposed by Katzenstein and Sil (2010), Jackson and Nexon (2004), Risse and Simmons (2002), and Barkin (2010). Overall application of a theoretical pluralism (weather analytic eclecticism or theoretical synthesis) remains problematic, and further research on how to apply these approaches, and how to reconcile all difficulties upon the application of such methodological approaches, remains in high demand. This research is therefore intended to make a contribution to this matter.

- The study on a discourse analysis is observed to be problematic by a number of scholars for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was noticed that some authors, including Larsen (1997), Chernysh (2011), Pietikäinen and Dufva (2006), Fairclough, and Fairclough (2013), argue on the matter of a discourse analysis terminology. Secondly, scholars also differentiate in their approach to application of a discourse analysis in foreign policy analysis. In this research, the approaches offered by Fairclough, and Fairclough (2013) and Larsen (1997) are carefully reviewed. The present study tends to take the Larsen's side, who offers to focus on states' political leaders, and their views and beliefs, which in many ways reflect on their political decisions. Overall, the present study agrees with Larsen (1997) in his emphasis on the use of language in discourse analysis. Moreover, it has been discovered that there are other authors who also share the same opinion (Davies, 1998; Obeng, 1997; Chilton, 2004; Obeng and Hartford, 2008). Thirdly, it was found that certain disagreement exists in terms of methodology of a discourse analysis. In this thesis, an eclecticism of the methodology offered by Newman (2008), Manheim, Rich, Willnat, Brians, Babb (2012), and Colin (2004) is applied.

- The study on the nature of the Russian identity originates in the 18th century and continued in further years. Among the authors contributed to the knowledge of the Russian national identity, particular stress needs to be made on the research made by Prizel (1998), Tolz (2004), Trenin (1996) and Tsygankov (2012). Even though these authors contributed the better understanding of the Russian national identity, they still do not have a commonly agreed definition. It has been discovered that Ponsard (2006) offered an approach to defining the Russian identity through some key

characteristics of the identity concept, namely history, geography, ethnicity, culture and religion. The approach applied in this thesis in many ways follows the line proposed by Ponsard, although with some amendments. Therefore, the present study applies a comprehensive conceptual approach to analyzing Russian national identity, which addresses the limitations of the previous research.

- According to the author's observation, the study on the domestic security threats in Russia is mostly limited to some key directive documents, which are not binding by their nature (National Security Concept (2000), National Security Strategy (2015) Military Doctrine (2014), Foreign policy Concept (2013). Although the body of research on the Russian security matters is also added by empirical research conducted by Mankoff (2011), Shaposhnikov (1993), Snetkov (2014) and others. It is also noted that the link between Russian foreign policy in Syria and the Russian domestic security matters was initially suggested by Malashenko (2013). In the present research research, the author applies the Malashenko's argument and also argues that Russian security-oriented foreign policy in Syria continues certain historical tradition. Overall, foreign policy position of the Russian Federation in relation to the Syrian conflict remains open for further discussion, as the conflict is still active.

- The study on Islam in Russia also seems to be problematic. Broad research projects about Islam in Russia were completed by Hunter (2004), Yemelianova (2003), Falkowski (2015), Malashenko (2010) and others, however, the authors did not address the confusion existing in the Russian political discourse on the matter of differentiation between the 'Islamist' currents. This thesis takes a challenge and offers a comprehensive study of different forms

of 'Islamism' existing in today's Russia. It also explains how 'Religious Extremism' and subsequent extreme currents of Islam appeared in Russia, and how they are represented in modern Russia. It also addresses the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in Middle Eastern states in general, and Syrian conflict in particular and the effects of such development on the Russian Muslims. Such a study of Islam in Russia represents a unique analytical material and adds to the general body of knowledge in the topic of Islam in Russia.

- The study of Russia's relations with the Middle East is also problematic. The literature on this topic is fractured in many research projects focusing on separate Middle Eastern state with minor note on relations with Russia (Gusher, 1997; Ozdal, Ozertem, Has, Dimirtepe, 2013; Posterebov, 1997; Feifer, 2009, and others). Another body of literature is mainly dedicated to a general analysis of geopolitical significance of the Middle Eastern region for Russia. Among these works are those under names of Magen (2013), Malashenko (2013), Rubenstein (2004), Kreutz (2006), Nizameddin (1999), although these research projects are quite outdated in a way that they were completed before the events of the Arab Spring, or didn't capture the recent developments. This thesis addresses the above limitations and offers an analysis of Russia's relations with the Middle Eastern states, their historical evolution and modern dynamics. It also makes a critical evaluation of how these relationships changed after the regime change during the Arab Spring revolutions.

- Particular attention in the thesis is devoted to the matter of Russia's relations with Syria. Although within the body of existing work, this matter is discussed rather briefly (Kreutz, 2006; Nizameddin, 1999; Sharnoff, 2009; Korany, 2008,

and others) and with no address to the recent developments. Other studies, however, are dedicated only to analysis of current developments in Russia-Syria relations (Trenin, 2014; Saradhyan, 2015; Al-Marhoun, 2014). This thesis takes a challenge to synthesize all existing studies, and add it to a critical analysis of modern developments.

The intended academic contribution of this thesis is therefore threefold. First of all, the study makes a theoretical contribution to the existing body of literature through:

- Making a review of a theoretical debate over the nature of the Russian politics and its foreign policy approach. This review represents a list of theories and approaches, which were offered by scholars in different periods of the Russian history.

- Applying theoretical synthesis of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism for the analysis of security-oriented and identity-based Russian foreign policy in Syria.

- Applying a political discourse analysis as a method of the research, attempting to reconcile certain confusion existing between authors on the nature of a discourse analysis. By providing the author's understanding of a political discourse analysis, it is intended to facilitate its use for other researchers.

Secondly, the present study makes a methodological contribution, as it applies the unique approach to the foreign policy analysis through theoretical synthesis. As such, theoretical synthesis offers a complex approach to the foreign policy analysis. Under such approach, the author synthesises two different theories (Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism), as well as their different ontological positions. A theoretical debate over complexities of an application of theoretical synthesis is still

active. In such a way, this thesis makes a contribution towards reconciliation of complexities caused by application of a theoretical synthesis, as well as reasons why this approach is preferred over analytic eclecticism. The study also contemplates a multi-level analysis of Russian foreign policy by taking into consideration the effects of external environment (system level), domestic matters (state level), as well as the role of the Russian political leadership in state's foreign policy (individual level). At the same time, the focus of this research is made on an analysis of Russian foreign policy mainly through the state level and individual level, as it is contended that in case of Syria, Russian foreign policy is sourced in Russian domestic policy implications.

As the third contribution, this dissertation seeks to shed light on certain developments of the Russian politics, as well as discuss other important matters in relation to Russian foreign policy. Knowledge of these matters can facilitate the current state of research on Russian domestic and foreign policies in the future. Among these tendencies, the author pays attention to the following developments:

- Understanding of a complex phenomenon of the Russian national identity and its components;

- Understanding the ideology of 'exceptionalism', according to which, Russia tends to pursue independent and sovereign foreign policy;

- Prioritization of individuals over institutions in the Russian politics. In particular, the study of Vladimir Putin's 'inner circle'. Such a development confirms importance of the individual level of analysis in case of Russian foreign policy;

- In modern Russia, domestic threats are prioritized over external ones;

- Islam in modern Russia is complex in nature and exists in a number of conflicting variations including so-called 'traditional' and 'non-traditional'

currents. While so-called 'traditional' Islam is represented by Sufism, 'non-traditional' Islam is inspired by 'Religious Extremism'.

The thesis is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is devoted to introduction. The second chapter explains a theoretical background of this thesis. This chapter makes a review of theoretical debate over the nature of Russian foreign policy. The argument for methodological innovation is discussed in the second part of the chapter. In this part, the author explains the thesis's methodological approach through theoretical synthesis of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism, and also determines the method of the research, which is a political discourse analysis, as well as introduce the reader to ontological and epistemological positions of the thesis. In subsequent two parts of the second chapter, the choice of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism as a theoretical background of the research is explained.

Chapter three focuses on answering one of the research questions: what is the effect of the Russian national identity on its foreign policy in Syria. The three parts of the third chapter are all devoted to explaining identity-based Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria. In this chapter, it is argued that there is a historic continuity in identity-based Russian foreign policy and also explain the complexity of the Russian identity phenomenon.

Chapter four aims to answer the second research question: to what extent do domestic security implications form Russian foreign policy decision-making in the Syrian conflict? In all parts of chapter four, the author analyses different aspects of security-based Russian foreign policy, demonstrates historical continuity in security-based Russian foreign policy. The chapter also explains the perceptions of security

threats in today's Russia and shows how certain domestic security threats affect Russian foreign policy in Syria.

Chapter fifth analyses a complex question of Islam in Russia. It is complex because there is some confusion in differentiating the terms of 'Wahhabism', 'Salafism', 'Jihadism', as well as 'Traditional' and 'Non-traditional' forms of Islam in Russia. Therefore the first part of the fifth chapter clarifies the conceptual differences between different currents of Islam in Russia, and also briefly explains the 'Sufi' tradition in Russian Islam. Subsequent parts discuss a historic background of how 'Religious Extremism' came to Russia, as well as describe the situation in the Russian Muslim populated regions nowadays. It is also the aim to explain how the threat of 'Religious Extremism' in Russia is correlated with the Syrian conflict, and how it affects Russian foreign policy in Syria.

The sixth chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the analysis of Russia's relations with the Middle Eastern states. The author offers a historical note on Russia's relations with the states of the Middle Eastern region, and also analyses how these relationships have changed during the events of the Arab Spring. This chapter also focuses on Russia's relations with Syria: their historical background and current situation. Overall it is explained why Russia supports Bashar al-Assad and why the case of Syria has become different from other states suffering from the Arab Spring revolutions.

CHAPTER II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 THEORETICAL DEBATE ON THE APPROACHES ANALYZING THE NATURE OF THE RUSSIAN CIVILIZATION AND RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy of the Russian Federation has always been complex. Scholarly debate on the Russian foreign policy approach and the nature of the Russian politics, in general, has been active through years and remains a matter of discussion in modern time. This chapter contemplates a critical study of scholarly debates and outlines theoretical approaches, which are used for the analysis of Russian foreign policy. These approaches are divided into five broad groups: mainstream approaches, ideology-driven approaches, nationalist approaches, geopolitically-oriented approaches; and Western-oriented approaches.

Mainstream approaches include Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism. In this group, Realism is the oldest and arguably the most long-lasting current in the International Relations theory-base. At the same time, the Realist theory also evolved through time and adopted new developments in the International Politics. The evolution of the Realist theory from Classic Realism to Neorealism, and finally to Neoclassic Realism demonstrates how time modifies basic concepts and adapts them to modern realities. Neoclassic Realism, which seems to be an advanced version Realism, systemizes the insights from Classic Realism, however, at the same time incorporates internal and external variables and utilizes a multi-level analysis. Neoclassic Realism is selected as one of the theories for the analysis of Russian foreign policy in this thesis, and it is discussed in more details in part 3 of this chapter.

Liberalist theory in Russia boosted after the fall of the Soviet Union and the Communist ideology. However, as Tsygankov and Tsygankov (2010) note, the Liberalist theory in Russia has become a product of the Western, rather than Russian approaches. Overall, the end of the Soviet system, in political and economic terms, also initiated the rise of the liberal ideology and liberal political parties such as 'Yabloko' ('Rosiyskaya Demokraticheskaya Partiya' – Russian Democratic Party); The Union of Rightist Forces ('Soyuz Pravykh Sil') and many others. Tsygankov and Tsygankov (2010) also categorize the Russian liberals into three groups: Modernizers, Institutionalists, and National Democrats. Modernizers are believed, according to Tsygankov and Tsygankov (2010, p. 61) to be supportive of Russia's cooperation with the West for the purpose of creating a common identity and cultural values. Institutionalists and National Democrats, on the other hand, despite sharing a sympathy to the West, refuse to adapt to a pro-Western model of the government. They also agree on the idea that "pro-American model of globalization in many ways caused the spread of terrorism" (Tsygankov and Tsygankov, 2010, p. 61). With this so-called 'American-style' globalization, Tsygankov and Tsygankov in many ways explain the events of the 9/11.

Constructivism is another theory in the group of mainstream theoretical approaches. It is suggested by Stephen Walt (1987), that Realism and Liberalism are limited in providing explanations of certain tendencies in the field of International Relations, while Constructivism pays attention to the sources of changes. The same thought is shared by Snyder (1991), Koslowski and Kratochwill (2007), who agreed on that Constructivism explains the demise of the Cold War. Constructivist theory is also widely used for the Russian foreign policy analysis. For example, Andrei P. Tsygankov, in his book "Russia and the West from Alexander to Putin Honor in

International Relations", suggests that the Russian sense of honor is the key to understanding the long history of the country's relations with the West (Tsygankov, 2012). Ted Hopf (2002) also relies on the idea that the identity of a state has an effect on its foreign policy. In this thesis, Constructivism is used as one of the theories explaining Russian foreign policy in Syria. It is argued that one of the reasons behind Russian foreign policy in the conflict has become a result of Russia's intention to sustain and revive its 'Great Power' status in the international arena. This matter is discussed in more details in part 4 of this chapter.

Ideologically-driven approaches are also very common for the study on Russian foreign policy. Overall, ideological orientation of any state affects its foreign policy decisions. It is argued by Wallander, that the type of political regime has systematic effects on the content of foreign policy because the institutions and processes of the political order play an important role or inform the foreign policy decisions and actions (Wallander, 1996, p. 3). Roberts (2005), as well as Jacobson (1994), suggest that ideologically informed conceptions of Marxism-Leninism provided a strategic context of the action for the Soviet decision-makers. On the other hand, as it is suggested by some scholars (Wohlforth, 2012; Tsygankov, 2013; Pursiainen, 2010), ideologically-driven approach to the Soviet foreign policy analysis was contested by scholars who mainly relied on the Realist approach for the Soviet foreign policy analysis. With this regard, as Wohlforth (2012) observes, the Realist analysis was forbidden in the Soviet Union for many years, and instead all scholars were forced to adhere to the official ideology of Marxism-Leninism. More recently, ideology-driven approaches evolved into neo-Communist school (Clover, 2012). This group is mainly represented by the leader and chairman of the Communist Party - Gennadi Zyuganov. According to Shearman (2015), Zyuganov urges Russia

to secure the promising future for itself only by returning to the Communism and the Soviet Union.

Another group of approaches for the analysis of Russian foreign policy is represented by the Nationalist strain with its roots in the Slavophile traditions. Slavophiles (or Pan-Slavs) and Westernizers, the two groups of intellectuals in the mid-19th-century Russia, represented opposing schools of thought concerning the nature of the Russian civilization. The term 'Slavophile' was first introduced by a poet Konstantin Batyushkov and Archimandrite Gavriil in 1840 (Horujy and Michelson, 2010). Walicki in his "History of Russian Thought" refers to the etymological meaning of Slavophilism, which literally means 'love of the Slavs'. Walicki also explains the way this term is described in the Russian historical literature. In particular, Slavophiles are referred to represent a group of ideologists belonging to the conservative nobility, whose outlook became formed in the late 1830's in opposition to the scholarly known as 'Westernism' (Walicki, 1979). The central issue of the Slavophiles' ideology was concentrated on Russia's relationship with the Western Europe. The principal tenets of their philosophy were formulated in 1837 in Ivan Kireyevsky's[1] unpublished article "A reply to Khomiakov", and were expanded in Kireyevsky's long essay 'On the Character of European Civilization and its Relationship to Russian Civilization'. Kireyevsky argued that the fabric of the European civilization was made up of three stands: Christianity, the young barbarian races who destroyed the Roman Empire, and the classical heritage (Leatherbarrow and Offord, 1987). As argued by Walicki, Russia's exclusion from the Roman heritage was the essential feature distinguishing it from the West.

The Slavophiles generally considered the Western Europe, which adopted the

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[1] Ivan Kireyevsky – a Russian literary critic and philosopher.

Roman Catholic and Protestant religions, as morally bankrupt and regarded the Western political and economic institutions (e.g., constitutional government and capitalism) as outgrowths of a deficient society. The Russian people, by contrast, adhered to the Orthodox faith, and thus, according to the Slavophiles, through their common faith and church, were united in a 'Christian community', which defined natural, harmonious, human relationships (Horujy, 2010, p. 27). Therefore, Slavophiles advocated against the Western influences and values at the expense of what they considered to be the unique cultural heritage of Russia. Among the main Slavophile thinkers were Ivan Kireyevsky, Aleksei Khomiakov (1900-14), Konstantin Aksakov (1861-80) and others. Slavophiles' philosophy was subsequently replaced by the Civilisationist school in the 20th century.

Civilisationists position Russia and its values as principally different from those of the West. According to the Civilisationist approach, Russia is viewed as a civilisation in its own right, which had a mission of spreading the Russian values abroad (Tsygankov and Tsygankov, 2010). It is argued (Tsygankov and Tsygankov, 2010) that in the 21st century, the ideas of the Slavophiles inspired the Russian Nationalists or Neo-Imperialists. Zevelev (2014) identifies two groups in the Nationalist school in Russia: Neo-Imperialists and Ethnic Nationalists. In the first half of the 1990s, the Neo-Imperialist's project focused on the idea of re-establishing the Russian state within the boundaries of the former Soviet Union, whereas, the essence of the Ethnic Nationalist program in Russia evolved around the idea of aligning the borders of Russia as a state and Russia as a nation, or in other words, creating a new polity on territories populated by ethnic Russians and some other Eastern Slavic peoples (Zvelev, 2014). In modern times, perhaps the most extreme Nationalist views are mainly represented by the leader of the Liberal Democratic

Party, Vladimir Zhirinovskii. As argued by Nizameddin (1999), Zhirinovskii speaks for a restoration of the Russian empire and its expansion in order for Russia to enjoy a full access to the Mediterranean and the Indian Ocean. Zevelev also points out that almost all public intellectuals, who can be considered Neo-Imperialists, from Gennady Zyuganov to Alexander Prokhanov, Eduard Limonov, and Sergei Udaltsov, expressed their support for the Kremlin's actions with regard to events in the Crimea in 2014 (Zvelev, 2014).

Another theory in the group of the Russian Nationalists belongs to Anatoly Chubais, a Russian politician, and businessman who was an influential member of the Boris Yeltsin's administration in the early 1990s; and the former (1998-2008) Head of the UES (United Energy System), the Russian electric power holding company. In his article on the Russia's strategy for the 21st century, Chubais contended that Russia should construct a "liberal empire' of its own from the pieces of the Soviet Union" (Chubais, 2003). According to Skidelsky (2007), Chubais offered a concept, under which Russia's mission should have been to promote the Russian culture and protect the Russian population in its 'neighborhood'; establish a dominant position in their trade and business, and guarantee its neighbors' 'freedom and democracy'. Only through 'the liberal empire', as Chubais argued (2003), Russia could occupy its natural place alongside the United States, the European Union, and Japan.

Later, in 2004, the idea of 'the liberal empire' was re-introduced by Leonid Gozman – a spokesman of the Union of Right Forces (SPS) party, and laid down as a new SPS's project - 'Liberal Imperialism' (White and Feklyunina, 2014). It is argued (Benediktov, 2013) that the project of 'Liberal Imperialism' suggests that Russia would see the post-Soviet environment as a zone of responsibility, so as to uphold liberal and democratic freedoms in the former Soviet republics. This also implies

that Russia would protect its own business interests in the post-Soviet environment on the basis of a liberal market model. Leonid Gozman believes that Russia should assume responsibility for protecting the rights of ethnic Russians in the former Soviet republics (Sputnik News, 2004). Also in his opinion, responsibility for developments in other countries will unite the political missions of Russia and the European Union (Sputnik News, 2004).

Finally, in 2006, Surkov, the Deputy Chief of the Presidential Administration, introduced a new Nationalist concept. In his concept, he referred to 'sovereign' and 'managed democracy' when assessing the Russian political system. By 'managed democracy' he understood "political and economic regimes imposed by centers of the global influence" (Surkov, 2006). In contrast to 'managed democracy', Surkov argued, that "Russia incorporates 'sovereign democracy', which acts in its own national interest, and is no different than democracy in Europe" (Surkov, 2006). Although, it is hard to agree with Surkov's argument that the Russian democracy concept has no difference from the European perception of democracy. It shall be better said that in Russia, the concept of democracy is built through Russia's modern understanding of sovereignty as opposed to the post-modern understanding of democracy in Europe.

Contrast view to the nature of Russian civilisation and Russian foreign policy is taken by representatives of the Western-oriented approach. This group is represented by two schools – Westernizers (Zapadniki) and Atlanticists. While the former was the school active in the 19th century, the latter mainly operated in the 1990s. The Westernizers take the opposite view than the Slavophiles. They believe that in order for Russia to succeed and take its place on the global political stage, it needed to adopt the Western industrial, cultural, and economic reforms (Copleston,

1986, p. 30). Hosking, in an interview with the Valdai Group in 2012, explained that in the 18th century, when Russia acquired the status of 'Great European Power', its political system, however, was very different from that of most European powers. For example, unlike Russia, the European states already were in the process of building constitutional political systems and nation-states. Therefore many Russians believed that the best way for Russia to strengthen its 'Great Power' status was to become more like the European countries, and in particular, to move towards constitutional and parliamentary regimes, and also become an industrialized nation-state, like France, Germany and the Great Britain. The Westernizers were firm in their belief that Russia was not the unique country with the unique destiny the way the Slavophiles believed. On the contrary, they believed that all countries had to follow the similar path the European states did and that Russia lagged severely behind the other countries of the world. It was argued (Sutton, 1988) that the Russian philosopher of the second half of the 19th century, Vladimir Soloviev, who also shared the Westerners' philosophy, defined Westernism as a direction of the Russian social thought and literature, that recognizes the spiritual solidarity of Russia and the Western Europe in cultural and historical ways. Leading Westernizer thinkers of the 19th century include Peter Chaadayev (in Edie et al., 1976, p. 106), Vissarion Belinsky (in Edie et al., 1976, p. 230), Alexander Herzen (in The Memoirs of Alexander Herzen, 1968, p. 1649) and many others.

In the similar fashion, Atlanticism emerged in the late 19th century. In Russia, Atlanticist roots back to the post-Cold War time. Smith (2002) identifies the moment when Russia first adopted Atlanticism in its foreign policy – in November 1981, when the Soviet President Leonid Brezhnev argued that Europe was 'our common home' upon his visit to the West Germany. The doctrine of Atlanticism was revived

by Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and later applied by Andrey Kozyrev's tenure as the Foreign Minister (1991-1996). According to Deschepper (2013), in his early years, Kozyrev insisted on so-called 'predestinated Greatness of Russia'. Deschepper (2013) also adds, that in the first years of the Russian Federation, the speeches of political leaders were not only focused on the will of Russia to be a member of the international system but also on the fact that this status belongs to Russia naturally. However, starting from 1992, Russia opted for improving the partnership with the West, in particular with the US and its European allies. It was argued (Morgan, 2008) that Andrey Kozyrev in his attempts to promote friendly relations with the Western states was said to be an Atlanticist. In further years, however, the Russian government decided to prompt more independent policy, which marked a departure from the Atlanticism. Such a change was mainly initiated by Yevgeny Primakov, who took over the Foreign Ministry after Kozyrev, and later became the Prime Minister.

In general, the arrival of Primakov as the Foreign Minister brought up major changes in the Russia's foreign policy model. In particular, Primakov's diplomatic involvement and attention to the former Soviet space helped in negotiating peace in Moldova and Tajikistan, as well as ratification of some security documents with Ukraine. Also, as Tsygankov (2010) explains, Primakov managed to restore Russia's independent foreign policy, however, some there was still certain dependence on the West in economic affairs. Overall, as argued by Livermore (1999), Primakov criticized Kozyrev's rather pro-American approach, which he said, "undermined Russian independence" (Livermore, 1999, p. 72).

Geopolitical school of thought is represented in Russia mainly by the Eurasianist school. Eurasianism, as the political philosophy, was first advanced by leading Russian thinkers in the 1920s, including Nikolai Trubetskoi, Pyotr Savitsky and Lev Gumilev (Aybak, 2006). During the Soviet time, Eurasianism drew the attention of the Soviet leaders, because, how Smith contends, "the Russians felt themselves to be not only the most numerous but also the greatest of all European peoples" (Smith, 2012, p. 34). Since the Soviet collapse in 1991, Russian academics and policy-makers have struggled to develop a concept that could guide Russia's revival, and Eurasianism has become one of them. As it was mentioned before, the appointment of Yevgeny Primakov as the Foreign Minister in January 1996 signified a new direction for Russia in its foreign policy towards a greater cooperation with the Central and East Asia, rather than alignment with the US. The negative attitude towards the US also seems to be sourced in quite a critical discourse about NATO's actions in Europe. In particular, many Russian politicians expressed their concerns over NATO's expansion into the territories of the East European states.

As Tsygankov observes, the Eurasianists tend to see Russia as a single cohesive civilizational entity formed as a result of coexistence and interaction between Europe and Asia (Tsygankov, 2007, p. 375). There is a certain scholarly debate on the typology of the Eurasianist approaches. Silviusa (2004), for instance, divides Eurasianism into Original and Neo-Eurasianism. Tsygankov (2006) offers to divide Neo-Eurasianists into two schools: Modernisers and Expansionists.

The Modernizers, as argued by Ersen (2004), are mainly supported by Prokhanov and Sultanov. According to them, the end of the Cold War brought the decline of the former 'superpowers' – not only the Soviet Union but also the US; the group also is

forecasting a third world war, which they say will reshape the spheres of influence in the world (Ersen, 2004, p. 135). The other group, the Expansionist's, is mainly advocated by Aleksandr Dugin (2009, 2014), the founder of the International Eurasian Movement. Dugin seems to be a controversial Russian geopolitical thinker. For Dugin, Eurasia is a special geographical space and civilizational zone, which represents the legacy of the Russian imperial and then Soviet 'gosudarstvennost' [statehood] (Dugin, 1999, p. 12). Dugin (1999) also argues that there is a confrontation between 'Atlanticist New World Order' (principally the US and the UK) and the Russia-oriented 'New Eurasian Order', where Russia acts to secure the preservation of the Eurasian nations and their cultural traditions.

2.2 THEORETICAL SYNTHESIS AS THE METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND A POLITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS AS THE METHOD OF THE RESEARCH

Until recently the dominant perspective in the International Relations theory was concentrated on the use of a paradigm-bound research, however, as Sill and Katzenstein (2010) explain, it proved to produce limitations and blind spots. For this reason, the foreign policy analysis cannot be approached by a paradigm-bound research. In this context, a theoretical pluralism seems to provide an alternative approach, which can be used as "a countervailing effort to overcome limitations inherent in paradigm-bound research in International Relations" (Sill and Katzenstein, 2010, p. 35). At the same time, a theoretical pluralism hasn't become a mainstream approach to the foreign policy analysis yet, and a number of scholars remain quite skeptical about using it in their research. For instance, Kratochwil (2007), Lapid (1989), Neumann (2008) can be included in this critical group. Despite

the criticism, a number of scholars support this pluralistic view (Katzenstein and Sil, 2010; Jackson and Nexon, 2004; Risse and Simmons, 2002; Barkin, 2010).

The concept of a theoretical pluralism pioneered the field of the International Relations in the late 90s. In 1997, Adler (1997) suggested that a link between typically opposed paradigms could be found in each research. Later on, the idea of a theoretical pluralism was supported by Fearon (2002) and Wendt (1999), who called to combine insights, cross boundaries and, if possible, synthesize specific arguments to gain more compelling answers and create a better picture of reality. It seems that the concept of a theoretical pluralism still remains rather new for the field of International Relations, and its use in the foreign policy analysis is still problematic.

In this thesis, a theoretical pluralism is used as an umbrella term, which unites a theoretical synthesis and an analytic eclecticism. A theoretical synthesis tends to be an approach, which mainly combines insights form different, and, in some cases, even conflicting theories. In synthesis, there is often no link between various theoretical approaches chosen for an analysis. Eclecticism, on the other hand, requires the provision of a point by which a researcher integrates different theoretical approaches. Overall, according to proponents of an analytic eclecticism, it seems to be a more complex approach compared a theoretical pluralism.

The proponents of an analytic eclecticism, Katzenstein, and Okawara (2010) argue that none of the major theoretical paradigms (Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism) can capture the complex interplay among material power, concerns over efficiency in the international politics, and the effects of identity. Therefore Katzenstein advocates for combining basic insights of theories, which will

compliment each other and create a comprehensive approach to the foreign policy analysis. In practice, though the application of an analytic eclecticism can be rather difficult, as it requires providing the links tying theories with one another, as well as the ways of how to reconcile different epistemologies of diverse theoretical traditions. A theoretical synthesis in this way tends to be less complex and doesn't overcomplicate the research. It allows a combination of diverse theories without a compulsory need to provide ties between theories we use in the analysis like an analytic eclecticism requires. Some scholars successfully apply this approach, for instance: a theoretical synthesis is used by Laferriere and Stoett (1999), who offer in their work 'International Relations Theory And Ecological Thought' to combine International Relations theories with ecology in order to provide a comprehensive analysis of the global environmental politics. Andrew Moravcsik (1998) also contributes in favor of a theoretical synthesis. In his book 'The Choice For Europe: Social Purpose And State Power From Messina To Maastricht' he uses a tripartite explanation of the European integration – economic interest, relative power, credible commitments. Then he introduces their major competitors and derives hypotheses, which permit to test these theories in the case of the European cooperation. Gulay Mutlu (2012) in his article 'Turkey's Foreign Aid Policy Toward Central Asia' takes a synthesis of Neo-Liberal and Neo-Realist views of the International Relations to explain the Turkish foreign aid policy.

This thesis synthesises two theories: Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism. Initially some basic insights of the Realist and Constructivist theories may seem conflicting, however, combination of key features of these two theories provides a strong theoretical bases for contemplating the Russian foreign policy analysis. It is also important to note here that not all scholars agree with a conflicting nature of the

Realist and Constructivist theory. For example, Constructivists like Wendt, see the role of their approach not in competing with traditional approaches but in building upon them (Wendt, 1999).

In this study, Neoclassic Realism is employed as one of the conceptual frameworks, which explains security-oriented Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria. In particular, Neoclassic Realism proves how do Russian domestic security implications affect Russian foreign policy in Syria. Constructivist theory, on the other hand, provides a comprehensive explanation for identity-based Russian foreign policy in Syria. This thesis studies identity and security as two independent matters, which at the same time equally affect Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria. Although it might also be suggested that identity and security can be interconnected. It can be so, if we see the rise of 'Religious Extremism' as a threat not only to the Russian domestic security and territorial integrity, but also to the Russian ethnic population. Ethnic Russians as a group in many ways represent a component of the Russian national identity, and if they are threatened, that means the whole Russian identity becomes put in danger. That is how security and identity might be represented as interdependent matters, although the argument of this thesis is rather opposite. As it mentioned above, identity and security are approached as two separate matters affecting Russian foreign policy in Syria. Moreover, it is argued that there is certain continuity in Russian foreign policy being identity-based and simultaneously security-oriented. This point is proved by providing a historical background for such a development of Russian foreign policy. This matter is discussed in details in subsequent chapters of this thesis.

Ontological and Epistemological orientations of the research

The questions of Ontology and Epistemology are particularly significant for the present study and for any research in general, as they shape a methodological orientation of the researcher. It was argued that Ontology and Epistemology are 'like a skin, not a sweater; they cannot be put on and taken off whenever the researcher wants (Furlong and Marsh, 2010, p. 184). According to Bates and Jenkins, "the teaching and learning Ontology and Epistemology is an important element of the political science, as it helps students to appraise, differentiate and choose between competing philosophies, theories and analytic traditions" (Bates and Jenkins, 2007, p. 55). Despite the fact that determination of Ontological and Epistemological approaches is key for each researcher, it should be noted that doing so is not always an easy task. In fact, some key scholars, such as Marsh and Stoker, as well as Hay, were heavily criticized for their "inconsistent and, sometimes inaccurate" Ontological and Epistemological definitions (Bates and Jenkins, 2007). The author tends to disagree with Bates and Jenkins in their critique to Marsh and Stoker because their explanations of Ontological and Epistemological traditions seem quite clear and logical. Therefore, the author's Ontological and Epistemological positions are mainly structured with the help of Marsh, Furlong, and Stoker's explanation of these approaches.

According to Marsh and Furlong (2010), Ontological and Epistemological positions are related, but at the same time need to be separated. They also contend, that "Ontological position affects, although does not determine, one's Epistemological position" (Marsh and Furlong, 2010). This though is also supported by Hay, who contends that "Ontology is logically prior to Epistemology" (Hay, 2002, p. 112). However Graham, Dixon and Jones III (2010) disagree and claim that the analysis

of Ontology is invariably shows it to rest upon Epistemological priors. It is rather debatable whether Ontology priors Epistemology, or *vice versa*. The author's understanding, however, falls into Hay's (2002) suggestion that determination of Epistemological position follows after Ontological.

If an Ontological position reflects the researcher's view about the nature of the world, Epistemological position reflects the view of what we can know about the world. Literally, Epistemology is a theory of knowledge, or, as Blaikie suggests, "Epistemology refers to the claims or assumptions made about the ways, in which it is possible to gain knowledge or reality" (Blaikie, 1993, p. 6). As argued by Bryman (2008), Ontological position is expressed as the dichotomy between Objectivism and Constructivism. Although Marsh and Furlong (2010) subdivide Ontological position into Foundationalist and anti-Foundationalist. If Objectivists (Foundationalists) posit a "real" world, "out there" (Marsh and Furlong, 2010, p. 185) independent of social actors, independent of our knowledge of it (Bryman, 2008, p.18), Constructivists (anti-Foundationalists) see the world as "socially constructed", and produced through social interaction and therefore being in a constant state of change (Marsh and Furlong, 2010, p. 185).

Epistemological positions, on the other hand, are classified into Positivism and Interpretivist (Bryman, 2008). Furlong and Marsh also offer another classification of Epistemological traditions into Scientific (Positivist) and Hermeneutic (Interpretivist) (Marsh and Furlong, 2010, p. 191). The adherents of the Scientific tradition see social science as "analogous to natural science, and advocate for the application of the methods of the natural sciences to the study of social reality" (Bryman, 2008, p. 13). As Furlong and Marsh explain, "in ontological terms they were

Foundationalists, as they believed that the world was real and independent of agents" (Marsh and Furlong, 2010, p. 17). In contrast, Hermeneutic adherents (Interpretivists) believe, that "the world is socially-constructed" (Marsh and Furlong, 2010, p. 17). As Bryman (2008) contends, they find application of scientific model to the study of the social world inadequate, as it is not able to capture the meanings, which human beings attach to social reality. Therefore, in such approach, the focus is placed on the meaning of behavior, and such approach has clear methodological implications.

Furlong and Marsh (2010) also suggest three approaches to Ontology and Epistemology: Positivist, Interpretivist, and Realist. Positivits approach is based on the Foundationalist Ontology, and suggests that the world exists independently of our knowledge of it. Interpretivist approach has a contrast view and suggests that the world is socially or discursively constructed. Realism is seen by Marsh and Furlong (2010) as the approach, which shares Ontological position with Positivism, but in Epistemological terms, modern Realism has more in common with Relativism.

The present study adopts a synthesis of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism as a theoretical approach. While Neoclassic Realism explains how domestic security implications affect Russian foreign policy in Syria, Constructivism is used as a theory explaining identity-based Russian foreign policy. Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism have two contrast Ontological positions. Realism accepts the world as it finds it and rests on the premise that the real world exists outside of our own perceptions. In this way, it represents the Objectivist (Foundationalist) Ontological position. Constructivist position, in contrast, suggests that perceptions matter and

inform our actions, and therefore it shares the Constructivist (anti-Foundationalist) Ontological position.

Epistemological position of this thesis falls into Interpretivist tradition. According to such approach, interpretations and meanings can be established and understood within discourses or traditions. The present study adopts a political discourse analysis as the method. An analysis of political discourses through speeches, interviews, statements of key Russian political figures prove that Russian foreign policy in Syria is identity-based and simultaneously security-oriented.

The present research also employs a multi-level analysis as a part of a theoretical synthesis, which is chosen as a methodological approach. However, it is important to point out that the study has a particular limitation, as the main focus of this research is maid on the state level and the individual level. One of the arguments of this thesis is that the Russian domestic security implications affect the state's foreign policy in Syria. In this way domestic interests dominate external interests, which is why the state level of analysis is prioritized over the system level. The individual level in this research focuses of the role of the Russian political leadership in formation of the state's foreign policy. This question is discussed in more details in subchapter 3.3 -'The role of leadership in Russia.'

Political discourse analysis as the method of research

Political discourse analysis is chosen as the method of this research. It needs to be stated that the study of a discourse analysis is complex. There are a few problematic matters concerning discourse analysis. First of all, there is certain confusion in regards to the general terminology of a discourse analysis. Moreover, as argued by Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough (2013), there is no clear

distinction between a political discourse and other types of discourse analysis. Initially, there is a controversy over the term 'discourse'. Moreover, there are many conflicting and overlapping definitions of a discourse and a discourse analysis. It also seems that definitions and the use of the term 'discourse' differ considerably from one approach to another. As argued by Larsen (1997), in traditional linguistics and social psychology, 'discourse' is often used as a micro concept, in other words as the way of analyzing a pattern of everyday conversations amongst individuals in different situations. Larsen also found, that 'discourse' is widely used in social theory and analysis as a macro concept, to show how the language shapes societal processes (Larsen, 1997).

Given this disciplinary diversity, it is no surprise that the term 'discourse' and 'discourse analysis' have different meanings among scholars. It is said that even Foucauld, one of the founders of the concept and, up till date, one of the most influential figures in the field, uses different understandings of a discourse in his works (Chernysh, 2011). Chernysh offered her own interpretation of Foucauld's understanding of a discourse, as "being a form of the social reality, in which a discourse shapes it on various dimensions" (Chernysh, 2011, p. 25). It can be suggested that a discourse analysis is an umbrella term for diversity of social-linguistic approaches, each of which focuses on the use of language in certain context. As Pietikäinen and Dufva (2006) also argue, discourse analysis is neither a single methodological or an analytical framework, nor a homogenous theoretical perspective but is a multi-faceted approach based on the use of language in the context. Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough, on the other hand, suggest first to view the nature of politics in order to understand a political discourse (Fairclough, and Fairclough, 2013, p. 3).

After discussing difference in understanding a discourse and a discourse analysis among scholars, the reasonable question rises on how to apply and conduct a discourse analysis. These two matters also remain problematic. A very interesting approach to a discourse analysis is offered by Isabela Fairclough and Norman Fairclough. Their unique approach integrates critical discourse-analytical concepts with the analytical framework of argumentation theory, on the basis of viewing a political discourse as primarily argumentative discourse (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2013). However this thesis mainly relies on the approach offered by Henrik Larsen, and below there are key points of this approach.

According to Larsen (1997), general problem in the foreign policy analysis is that traditional literature-base on the foreign policy analysis tends to present the beliefs in individualist and positivist ways without taking into account the impact of language and the societal foundation of the beliefs. The problem of the traditional literature, as identified by Larsen (1997), is twofold - belief systems and psychological mechanisms. As such, "images or perceptions fall within the category of belief systems, while the psychological factors usually are supposed to be a tendency to focus on the individual decision-maker" (Larsen, 1997, p. 3). Both beliefs and psychological mechanisms usually assume that language is a transparent medium, which is without its own dynamics.

Overall, as it is argued by Larsen, literature on individual's belief systems suffers from the lack of general consideration of the impact of an individual on the general line of a country's foreign policy," while focusing on the individual decision-maker in the traditional approach is "mainly concentrated on discussions of roles' versus 'personality' of the top political leader, individual decision-maker" (Larsen, 1997, p. 4). It even seems useful, as the focus on the top political leaders reflects his/her

views and beliefs, which might well be "a reflection of his/her political office (role) and which therefore express more general views" (Larsen, 1997, p. 6). However, the treatment of political actor's views is often positivist in traditional literature meaning that these views are presented just out of many variables and seen as not meaningful references for the actors (Larsen, 1997, p. 9). Such treatments of the actors' beliefs seems wrong, as the world in a way is constructed by beliefs and views, therefore considerable attention need to be devoted to the language and its use. As Larsen also notices, the traditional literature considers language as transparent medium, which is however quite inaccurate, as the language is argued to "have its own dynamics" (Larsen, 1997, p. 9). Therefore, the criticism of the traditional approaches leads to adoption of a linguistic approach, drawing on elements of both Structuralist and post-Structuralist linguistics – applying the concept of political discourse (Larsen, 1997, p. 11). As Larsen also explains, under the Structuralist approach, language is the closest we can come to the meaning, as we do not access meaning straightaway, just language (Larsen, 1997, pp. 11). Overall, it is agreed by a number of other scholars, that the language plays the key role in a discourse analysis (Davies, 1998; Obeng, 1997; Chilton, 2004; Obeng and Hartford, 2008). At the same time there are a few limitations concerning language in a discourse analysis. One of such limitations, as observed by Obeng and Hartford (2008), concerns the application of translations to the language, as some indigenous meanings might be lost as a result of conversion from one language to another.

When it comes to the procedure of conducting a discourse analysis, it has also proved to be problematic. As Muller contends, there is no shared understanding or established methodology of doing a discourse analysis (Muller, 2010). Moreover,

approaches to a discourse analysis are far from drawing on a commonly accepted methodological canon, because different forms of a discourse analysis have a different methodology (Muller, 2010). In this thesis, a discourse analysis is used as a tool for studying Russian foreign policy in Syria. In a process of use of a discourse analysis the model proposed by Newman (2008) is applied. Newman (2008) identifies three steps the researcher is recommended to take as a prerequisite for a discourse analysis. First, delimiting a discourse to a wide but manageable range of sources and timeframes. From these texts, the analyst then identifies the representations that comprise the discourse, taking into account censorship and other practices that shape the availability of text. Finally, to explore change, one uncovers layering within the discourse. However even more comprehensive scheme is proposed by Manheim, Rich, Willnat, Brians, Babb (2012), who suggest four stages of a discourse analysis: identifying the individuals or group; selecting appropriate 'texts'; refining versus building models; collecting and reporting the results. In this thesis, it is decided to build a discourse analysis on that model.

Interesting point was proposed by Colin, who suggests to separate a foreign policy discourse analysis from a foreign policy analysis, as "a foreign policy discourse does not relate solely to foreign policy" (Colin, 2004, p. 25). In Colin's opinion, the Russian foreign policy discourse held during the Kosovo crisis "served as catalyst for domestic political crisis" (Colin, 2004, p. 25). In other words, the Russian foreign policy discourse reveals certain connection between domestic policy and foreign policy. It is hard to dismiss this point, as it seems to be quite true in case of the Syrian conflict as well. Russian foreign policy discourse during the Syrian crisis is in particular influenced by the domestic security situation. As in case of the Kosovo crisis, the crisis in Syria, itself "generated the mobilization of the discourse" (Colin,

2004, pp. 25). Overall, also according to Colin, dissociation of a foreign policy discourse from a foreign policy analysis is quite unusual task, as in "domain of the International Relations, a foreign policy discourse is mainly understood with reference to foreign policy, meaning that actions undertaken internationally is usually correspondent to the discourse held" (Colin, 2004, p. 25). But, as Colin contends, using strictly International Relations approach might be not enough for a comprehensive analysis of a foreign policy discourse. In other words, discourse practice belongs not only to foreign policy but also to domestic policy. Foreign policy discourse shouldn't be seen as a "manifestation of foreign policy" (Colin, 2004, p. 25), as "the person or producer of the discourse is usually a domestic policy maker" (Colin, 2004, p. 25). This argument supports the argument used for the present study, according to which domestic and foreign policies are interconnected.

The present analysis mainly relies on official speeches and statements of the Russian President - Vladimir Putin, the Prime Minister – Dmitry Medvedev, and the Foreign Minister – Sergei Lavrov and some other politicians in Russia. At the same time, when it comes to the analysis of a discourse regarding a threat of 'Religious Extremism', The study also takes into consideration statements and speeches of some Russian military and security personnel (for instance, Alexander Bortnikov, the Director of the Federal Security Service; Igor Sergunin, the Colonel-General, the Head of the Russian Military Intelligence). Although it has proven to be quite hard to find official scripts of these statements, therefore they were approached via news agencies' websites. Overall, it is suggested contemplating the analysis of speeches and official statements of the key figures in Russian foreign policy, because their beliefs, views and statements form a Russian foreign policy discourse and reflect the country's foreign policy.

Discourse analysis seems to be a useful tool for conducting such an analysis. At the same time, it also needs to be said that an option to include interviews into the body of present qualitative study was considered. In particular, initially it was planned to include the interviews of the members of the Russian Federation Embassy in London, which the author had a chance to take as a part of an internship in the past. Unfortunately, the results of the interviews showed that the answers to interview's questions were given strictly according to the official political discourse. In particular, the members of the embassy copied the spoken word and phrases of the President and the Foreign Minister. Moreover, the answers of the interviewees were to large extent identical. Any request to demonstrate personal insights to of the diplomats to the events in Syria and Russian foreign policy in particular was answered with phrases like: "our opinion goes in line with the opinion of the policymakers back home". Therefore, a decision was made to exclude interviews from the body of the qualitative study of this thesis, as it is believed believed that they do not make any contribution to the quality of this research project.

In this research, two separate discourses are anlysed. Firstly, a discourse on how the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in the Middle East affects the domestic security situation in Russia, and secondly, a discourse on Russia's 'Great Power' identity. With regards to the limitations on periods, this study provides analysis of both discourses dated between:

- On the discourse on the threat of 'Religious Extremism' - from 15 March 2011 (the beginning of the civil war in Syria) up till present time;
- On the discourse of Russia's 'Greatpowerness' – from the beginning of Putin's first term as the President (1999) up until present time.

When it comes to the first discourse on 'Religious Extremism', it should be said that there is a confusion existing on the matter of a terminology of 'Religious Extremism'. The terms 'Extremism', 'Islamism', 'Wahhabism', 'Salafism', 'Jihaddism' are equally used on various occasions when describing the matters of 'Religious Extremism'. A little or none attempt is maid towards differentiation of the terms. This matter is discussed in more details in chapter V, and an attempt is maid towards reconciliation of a confusion existing in official interpretation of 'Religious Extremism'. It was also noticed that a discourse on the matter of 'Religious Extremism' is fractured on a few sub-topics', such as:

- The global threat of 'Religious Extremism', although 'terrorism' appears to be most common terminology in this case. Such a discourse is traced in a number of official sources, including Sergey Lavrov's remarks and answers to media questions at a news conference on Russia's diplomacy performance in 2015, Moscow, January 26, 2016 (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Website, 2016). Vladimir Putin, in his article to the New York Times in 2013, argued "mercenaries from Arab countries fighting there [in Syria], and hundreds of militants from Western countries and even Russia, are an issue of our deep concern" (Putin, 2013). He also stressed that the "extremists" activities "threatens us all" (Putin, 2013);

- Threat of 'Religious Extremism' to the Russia's national security (speeches named below);

- Discourse on how some of Russia's collegues use 'Religious Extremism' against Russia (Vladimir Putin at the Press statement and answers to journalists' questions following the APEC Leaders' Meeting on October 8, 2013 (Putin, 2013); the statement by the Chief of the GRU military intelligence

service, Colonel-General Igor Sergun on May 23, 2015 (YourNewsWire.com, 2015).

It was also noted that a discourse on how 'Religious Extremism' threatens Russia's domestic security is largely presented in some key directive security and foreign policy documents, such as Military Doctrine, 2014; National Security Concept, 2000; National Security Strategy, 2015; Foreign Policy Concept, 2013). The documents stress a priority of safeguarding the national interests and security of the Russian Federation. The documents also explicitly recognise a threat posed by so-called 'terrorism' for Russian domestic security, as well as a global threat of 'terrorism'. In particular, Foreign Policy Concept states that a "threat of international terrorism is one of the most dangerous realities in today's world" (Foreign Policy Concept, 2013). The Concept also specifies a threat posed by the Islamic State: "the global terrorist threat has reached a new high with the emergence of the Islamic State international terrorist organization and similar groups that have descended to an unprecedented level of cruelty in their violence" (Foreign Policy Concept, 2013). The Concept also recognizes Russia's essential role in fighting with 'Religious Extremism' both internationally and domestically: "Russia views combating international terrorism as an essential government task and a key priority for international security" (Foreign Policy Concept, 2013).

The Military Doctrine recognizes 'Religious extremism' as both domestic and international threat. In regards to domestic threat of 'Religious Extremism', the document states that such activities "undermine the sovereignty and violating the unity and territorial integrity of the Russian Federation" (Military Doctrine, 2014). Among other domestic threats of 'Religious Extremism', the National Security

Concept also says that "terrorist and extremist organizations aimed at changing the constitutional order of the Russian Federation through violence, disrupting the operation of the organs of state power, destroying or disrupting the functioning of military and industrial facilities, critical public infrastructure, and transport infrastructure, and intimidating the population, including by the acquisition of weapons of mass destruction, and radioactive, poisonous, toxic, and chemically and biologically dangerous substances, carrying out nuclear terrorist attacks, and attacking and disrupting the continuous operation of the Russian Federation's vital IT infrastructure" (National Security Concept, 2000).

If we refer to the official political discourse on the threat of 'Religious Extremism' to the Russian national security, as well as the global threat of 'Religious Extremism', particular attention needs to be paid to the following statements and speeches:

- Dmitry Medvedev's Statement on the situation in Libya on March 21, 2011, in which he contended that the Arab revolutions have "direct impact" on Russia (Medvedev, 2011);

- In 2013, Vladimir Putin, who was the Prime Minister then, expressed particular concern over "extremists" activities, which threaten all countries, including Russia (Putin, 2013);

- Presidential Address to the Federal Assembly on December 3, 2015. In the Address, Vladimir Putin devoted quite a big part of his speech to "the global threat of terrorism", and to Russia in particular;

- The Valdai Discussion Club speech by Vladimir Putin on October, 22 2015. In the speech, Mr. Putin demonstrated his concern of a possible global

expansion of the Islamic State. He specifically argued that the IS "represents a threat to everyone, including Russia" (Putin, 2015);

- Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's live radio interview with Sputnik, Ekho Moskvy and Govorit Moskva, Moscow, April 22, 2015. In his statement, Lavrov contended that "the Islamic State is Russia's main foe" (The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation Website, 2015);

- Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov's interview with NTV on October 19, 2014. In the interview, Lavrov outlines how Russia fights with 'Islamist' groups in Syria, and that "terrorists should be fought uncompromisingly and relentlessly" (Lavrov, 2014);

- The Statement of the Head of Russia's Security Council - Nikolai Patrushev, in which he identified the Islamic State as "the greatest threat to world peace and security and as the danger, which could be getting closer to home" (Interfax, 2015);

- General Sergey Smirnov in his statement said that "the threat coming from the so-called Islamic State is absolutely real for Russia and its neighbors" (Russia Today, 2015)

- Address by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, New York on September 27, 2014. Mr. Lavrov urged all Russia's international colleagues "to establish a united front to counter the growing terrorist threat" (Lavrov, 2014).

It is believed a remark needs to be made on Russia's discourse on how some of Russia's collegues use 'Religious Extremism' against Russia. This matter is discussed in chapter VI, part 6.3. It is also believed that certain Russia's positions and discourse are influenced by "political imyths, such as Russia's poor relation to

the West and the memory of the Second World War" (Colin, 2004, p. 25). Overall, so-called 'myths' play important role in political discourse. According to Kane and Jorgensen, one of the main functions of myths is to provide people with a deeper story, a narrative that can encompass their own individual stories and give them meaning, worth, and hope, connected by something more than mere contingency (Kane and Jorgensen, 2014, p. 86). The myth of the Western world as an enemy has its own history in Russia. The myth has become more intense after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and remains very vital now. In relation to Syria, some Russian politicians contend that Russia's collegues (in particular those of the Western states) provoke the rise 'Religious Extremism' and use it as the tool to destabilize Russia.

The second discourse held during the Syrian conflict mainly targeted on a representation of Russia as a 'Great Power'. Here the author would like to refer to the research of Colin (2004) on the Russian foreign policy discourse during the Kosovo crisis. Colin argues that the Russian foreign policy discourse was "aimed at constructing and imposing its own worldview and driving principles of the world" (Colin, 2004, p. 25). It seems to be quite a relevant point also in the context of Russian foreign policy in Syria. Moreover, certain historical continuity can be traced in relation to the 'Great Power' discourse in Russia. With this regard, it needs to be said that the Russian identity today is in many ways the product of historical determinants. It means that throughout the Russian history, there has always been the particular discourse on Russia's 'exceptionalism' and 'Greatness'. In modern times, such a discourse can be traced in many public speeches:

- 'Russia at the turn of the Millennium' statement by Vladimir Putin on December 30, 1999. The statement discussed the place of Russia in the new Millennium and seemed to send a strong message to the Russian people and Russia's colleagues in the international arena. Although, as the President outlined, Russia found itself in deep crisis, including economic and social problems, a focus of policies in Russia in the new millennium would be directed to "Russia's revival and prosperity". According to Putin, such a "revival and prosperity" was due to be reached through the "unity of Russian society", "patriotism", "pride of the country, its history and achievements". Mr. Putin made a stress on the country's historical "greatness" as the basis of its revival (Putin, 1999);

- The Munich speech by Vladimir Putin on February 2, 2007. One of the main topics underlying the speech is a danger of unipolarity in the world, which "creates serious international tensions". Mr. Putin argued that Russia stands against the unipolarity and "supports the renewal of dialogue on this important questions", including those on non-proliferation of nuclear weapons. At the same time, the President stressed that "Russia is a country with a history that spans more than a thousand years and has practically always used the privilege to carry out an independent foreign policy" (Putin, 2007);

- The Crimea speech by Vladimir Putin on March 18, 2014. The speech is mainly dedicated to the Crimea matter and draws on the significance of a "restoration of unity" with Crimea, which shares "common historical legacy and a very important factor in regional stability" for Russia. Mr. Putin stressed the legitimacy of a reunification with Crimea, and called all members of the

international community to respect the "legitimate decision of the people of Crimea". In particular, he recalled that "Russia is an independent, active participant in international affairs; like other countries, it has its own national interests that need to be taken into account and respected". (Putin, 2014);

- The Valdai Discussion Club speech by Vladimir Putin on October 22, 2015. The discussion held during the meeting at the Valdai Club was dedicated to issues of war and peace. In the speech, Mr. Putin to great extent speaks about how the US and its EU allies use war as a way to resolve some contradictions and reach their political goals. He also stressed that the West creates an enemy image of Russia nowadays. He outlines the difference in foreign policies of Russia and the West and does this in order to demonstrate that a political line chosen by the West undermines democratic values. Putin also recalled "the collapse of the Soviet Union" as "one of the twentieth century's great tragedies", which had put Russian in a severe economic and social crisis. However, the President said, that "Russia has every chance of becoming one of the leaders" (Putin, 2015);

- Address by the Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov to the 69th session of the UN General Assembly, New York on September 27, 2014. Mr. Lavrov demonstrated his concern about "the policy of ultimatums and philosophy of supremacy and domination", which undermine "the process of development for a polycentric and democratic world order". According to Lavrov, Russia is strongly committed to a constructive dialogue with its international colleagues and "open to discussion of the most complex issues" (Lavrov, 2014);

- Directive documents (Foreign Policy Concept, National Security Concept, and

National Security Strategy). The Concept sets the basic principles of Russian foreign policy. The document stresses that Russia is one of the main actors in the global political scene, and as such, pursues the constructive partnership with its international colleagues in various spheres, "maintains and strengthens international rule of law" and other international values. At the same time, the document recognizes a priority of the national interests in Russian foreign policy-making (Foreign Policy Concept, 2013). The same holds true for the National Security Concept, which specifies the national interests of the Russian Federation, as well as the measures it is ready to implement for safeguarding the national interests and security (the National Security Concept, 2000).

Just like with a discourse on the threat of 'Religious Extremism', a discourse on Russia's 'Great Powerness' can be traced in a number of key directive documents on Russian domestic and foreign policy (the National Security Concept, 2000; the National Security Strategy, 2015; the Foreign Policy Concept, 2013; the Energy Strategy of Russia for the period up to 2030 (2009). The documents stress Russia's importance in the world politics and outline Russia's pursuit on restoration its place on the world political scene.

In modern Russia, the 'exceptionalist' ideology seems to be carefully built by the government. A particular focus of such an ideology is made on improving and sustaining 'the Great Power' identity in Russia's foreign affairs, rising patriotic mood among the Russian population, and improving the social unity. As a part of such an ideology, the 'cult of Vladimir Putin's personality' seems to be actively promoted by the Kremlin. In the thesis, it is argued that that the ideological orientation of a state

affects its foreign policy, and it is believed that the ideology of 'exceptionalism' continues the tradition of Russian foreign policy being identity-based.

All sources named above were accessed on-line via the Russian federal websites and some news agencies' portals. The federal website is open to public and is dedicated specifically to the President of the Russian Federation (www.kremlin.ru) with all President's speeches and transcripts of all his meetings and press conferences. The website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (www.mid.ru) also provides an opportunity to explore basic documents on Russian domestic and foreign policies, as well as statements and speeches of the Foreign Minister. Both websites provide an open access and offer a selection of all official documents translated into English.

Apart from the websites of the Russian President and the Foreign Minister, the author also accessed the websites of Russian and foreign newspapers, journals with input from a number of academic and government experts, and websites of the major information agencies in Russia and abroad. The majority of Russian media websites, such as Russia Today (https://www.rt.com), TASS Russian News Agency (http://tass.ru/en), Russia in Global Affairs (http://eng.globalaffairs.ru), Russia Direct (http://www.russia-direct.org) and others are translated into English. Speeches and official statements of the Russian government authorities are also translated into several languages, which make them easily approachable.

Cultural competence was argued (Newman, 2008) to be another important element of a discourse analysis. According to Newman, "knowledge of language, culture, general social and political settings provide the researcher with cultural competence, although, on the other hand, there can be possible traps in being a

native speaker" (Newman, 2008, p. 63). In case of the present thesis, this advice is quite relevant, because as a Russian, the author contemplates an analysis of Russian foreign policy, and sometimes it has proved to be quite hard to stay objective. Nevertheless, in the present research, the author understands that it is a requirement to stay an independent observer in order to deliver a valid analysis free of any national sentiments.

Discourse analysis also needs to be differentiated from a content analysis. According to Manheim, Rich, Willnat, Brians, and Babb, a content analysis focuses on "the quantitative analysis of words and on the quantitative analysis of grammatical constructions and phraseology used in political texts" (Manheim et al, 2012, p. 351). At the same time, a content analysis might positively compliment discourse analysis. For example, a content analysis can make the argument on a 'Great Power' discourse stronger. In the article t of Vladimir Putin on 30 December 1999 – "Russia at the turn of the Millenium" (Putin, 1999), a content analysis presents a particular value. As per the author's observation, the combination of words 'great', 'greatness', 'great power', 'greatness of Russia', 'great achievements', 'great country' tantamount to seven times in the document. It is believed the statement sends a specific ideological message to the Russian people and the audience abroad. Moreover, it was the first official statement Vladimir Putin delivered at the beginning of his first Presidential term. In many ways, it identified the main aims formulated by Putin for his Presidency. By this article, he stressed his understanding of Russia as the "Great Power", as well as his desire to improve this status for the country he was going to rule. The content analysis of the document is attached in Appendix 1 to the thesis.

2.3 REALISM AS THE THEORY EXPLAINING SECURITY-ORIENTED RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

There is much controversy among scholars and policy makers on the matter of which theoretical approach to choose for the Russian foreign policy analysis. The main purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate the expediency of using Neoclassical Realist theoretical perspective. Neoclassical Realist analytical framework is offered in order to identify the influence of certain domestic factors on Russian foreign policy in Syria. Generally speaking, with the help of Neoclassic Realism the author demonstrates that Russian foreign policy in Syria is security-oriented. This chapter also proposes another argument that Neoclassic Realism represents an advanced approach within the body of the Realist theory. To prove that, an evolution of Realist theory from Classic Realism into Neoclassic Realism is demonstrated in this chapter.

Realism is widely regarded as the most influential theoretical approach in the body of International Relations (Burchil, 2001). It has complex and rich tradition of thought, which dates back to the writings of Thucydides (in Crane, 1998; Bugby, 1996), as well as Niccolò Machiavelli (in Gilber, 1984; Skinner, 1981; Sulivan, 1973, D'Amao, 1972), Thomas Hobbes (in Hobbes, 2007), and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778). Thucydides was the first to describe International Relations as anarchic and immoral. His works had a great impact on the way contemporary analysts perceive the International Relations. As argued by Kemos (1994), writings of the early Cold War years often derive their inspiration from the Thucydides work, specifically the conclusions, which Thucydides drew from his study of power and competition in bipolar systems. Niccolo Machiavelli, in his key works, such as "The Prince" (in Machiavelli and Bull, 2003) and "The Discourses" (in Machiavelli, 2005),

expresses his views on the manner in which a state should be run and the manner in which interstate relations should be conducted to achieve the best results for the state.

As a school of thought, Realism contains numerous related branches, such as Classical Realism, Defensive and Offensive Realism, Structural Realism (neorealism), and Neoclassic Realism. Whereas Doyle (1990) has another view on Realism typology, according to which he identifies three forms of Realism: minimalism, fundamentalism, and structuralism. He differentiates minimalism from fundamentalism by saying that minimalism is less certain about the permanence of human nature, whereas fundamentalists claim that human nature is characterized by a permanent drive for power, both in domestic and International politics. According to Doyle, Martin Wright is an example of minimalist, while Hans Morgenthau's work is an example of fundamentalism (Doyle, 1990). Structuralism (or Neorealism), represented mainly by Kenneth Waltz, claims that the international structure itself determines rational action and power seeking (Doyle, 1990).

Classic Realism as a theory of International Relations was established in the post-World War II, however, often associated with the names of Niccolò Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Edward H. Carr, Hans Morgenthau, Reinhold Niebuhr (1940). Among Classical Realism's leading proponents perhaps the most prominent was Hans Morgenthau. He takes much inspiration from earlier scholars such as Machiavelli and Thomas Hobbs. In his notable work "Politics among Nations", Morgenthau puts forward what he considers to be the six principles of political Realism (Morgenthau, 1948). According to Mearsheimer, the logic of Classic Realism suggests that states are the main actors in the world politics (Mearsheimer, 2005). Moreover, according to Morgenthau, Classic Realism sees International

Relations as a result of human nature (Morgenthau, 1948). This argument is also advocated by Machiavelli and Hobbes, as they state that the human interests prevail over ideology (Hobes, 2007; Machiavelli, 2005; Machiavelli and Bull, 2003). Human nature is inherently flawed, therefore conflict occurs as a natural outcome of conflicting nations' search for power. According to Carr, as reflected by Mearsheimer, International politics is always a power politics, and it is impossible to eliminate power from them (Mearsheimer, 2005).

By contrast, Neorealist theory, advanced by Kenneth Waltz in his 1979 book "Theory of International Politics", ignores human nature and focuses on the effects of the International system (Walt, 1998). For Waltz, the International system consists of a number of 'Great Powers', each seeking to survive (Waltz, 2010, p. 79). Continuing Waltz's thought, because the system is anarchic, as there is no central authority to protect states from one another, each state has to survive on its own (self-help system). Waltz (2010) also argues that this condition leads weaker states to balance against, rather than bandwagon with, more powerful rivals. With such a theory, Waltz hasn't proposed a completely new framework though. He rather re-worked some of the already existing ideas and mixed them with new concepts. It is also important to note that Waltz's Neorealism received quite a critical evaluation by a number of scholars, such as Ashley (1984), Keohane (1986); Buzan, Little and Jones (1993). As outlined by Gilpin (1986), Waltz took common Realist assumptions and installed a structural design around this group. Cox also criticizes Neorealism as being "too US-centric and time specific in its Cold War focus" (Cox, 1986, p. 204). Barry Buzan challenges Neorealism, arguing that it underestimated the importance of the regional level in International Relations (Soderbaum, 2012, p. 17).

Two structural theories derived from the Realist school are represented with Offensive and Defensive Realism. These two lines of thought inside the Realist school fundamentally disagree over whether the anarchic nature of the international system causes states to preserve the status quo, as Defensive Realists argue (Waltz, 1986; Snyder, 1991), or to maximize relative power, as Offensive Realists believe (Mearsheimer, 2006; Labs, 1997; Zakaria, 1992).

One of the debates within contemporary Realism evolved around a distinction between Neorealism and Neoclassic Realism. The term 'Neoclassic Realism', was initially coined by Gideon Rose in 1998 (Rose, 1998). Apart from Rose, Neoclassic Realism theory was supported and developed by Thomas J. Christensen (1996), William C. Wohlworth (1993), Asle Toje (2012), Tom Dyson (2010), Jeffrey W. Taliaferro, Steven E. Lobell, and Norrin M Ripsman (2009). Under Rose, Neoclassic Realism "explicitly incorporates both external and internal variables, updating and systematizing certain insights drawn from Classic Realist thought" (Rose, 1998, p. 44). Its adherents also argue that the scope and ambition of country's foreign policy are driven first and foremost by its place in the international system and specifically by its relative material power capabilities. This is why they are Realist. However, the impact of such power capabilities on foreign policy is indirect and complex, because systemic pressures must be translated through intervening variables at the unit level. This is why they are Neoclassic (Rose, 1998, p. 44).

Neoclassic Realism, in general, can be seen as a universal approach incorporating main properties of the Realist theory. Moreover, Neoclassic Realism offers a multi-level approach. On the one hand, it derives from Neorealism an idea that systemic factors determine the general direction of policy. On the other hand, like other

Realist theories, Neoclassic Realism is state-centric and holds that competition for power and influence between states in an anarchic international system is the most significant feature that defines international politics.

Neoclassic Realism also addresses the dependence of state's foreign policy on its domestic matters. This point is developed more below. Apart from that, it also shares another Classic Realism assumption that foreign policy is made at the state level by political leaders. According to Neoclassical Realists, state's foreign policy is typically formulated by a small group of senior leaders and officials, often referred to as the 'foreign policy executive' (Rathbun, 2008). Therefore, Neoclassic Realism approach utilises a multi-level analysis, one that scrutinises both the state unit and the system unit it is embedded in.

Initially, the idea of multi-level approach was advocated by Edward Carr (1964). If one imagines a state in the international system as a ship, all components matter in its operation at the sea: the captain of the ship (the individual level), the size, technical attributes of the ship (the state level), as well as the weather, sea condition, as well as other ships, how they interact with each other during their navigation (the system level). A ship sails normally provided all 'the systems' operate in a uniform way. Just like with the navigation of the ship, state's foreign policy can be analysed in a scrutiny of the International system environment (the system level), the state's domestic policy implications (the state level), as well as the decision-making of the state's leaders (the individual level).

It is crucial to understand that on the one hand, Neoclassic Realism shares with Classic Realism and Neorealism the basic assumptions about the nature of the International Relations, which are fundamental to the Realist paradigm. On the

other hand, Neoclassic Realism holds that, while the distribution of power within the international system is the key independent variable in determining the range of state's foreign policy (the dependent variable), it is conditioned by the interplay of 'intervening variables' within the state itself. These 'intervening variables' can be the perceptions of its leaders, the system of the government, or others. Tatyana Romanova suggests that a broad definition of Neoclassic Realism would describe it as a search for an answer to why the pressures of global and regional factors produce a certain type of foreign policy (Romanova, 2012). If we remember the famous metaphor of a 'billiard ball', Neoclassical Realism contends that the properties of a 'billiard ball' affect the tactics of state's actions. In other words, foreign policy of a country is determined by its domestic structure and factors, as well as the external environment (Northedge, 1986). Therefore, foreign policy to a large extent is the product of a complex process of interaction between internal (domestic) and external factors. Both, domestic factors, along with external variables, form the operational environment of foreign policy-making. Sebastian Harnisch (2012) notes how some scholars contend that external pressures alone are inadequate to explain the trajectory of Russia's foreign policy. That means that domestic factors often serve as a bridge between external forces and foreign policy choices. Neil Malcolm and Alex Pravda continue this thought by saying that any study of the International Relations mostly focuses on the International systemic level, while domestic factors are most often treated as residual (Malcolm, Pravda, Allison, Light, 1996). In this way, Neoclassic Realism provides a solution, as it also considers the effects of domestic factors on state's foreign policy.

One of the core arguments of this thesis is that Russian foreign policy in Syria is the product of an interplay between key variables (historical ties between two states,

military interests, economic interests, strategic considerations, domestic security implications, as well as desire to sustain 'the Great Power' status in the region and in the world politics). In this thesis, it is suggested that Russian foreign policy in Syria is identity-based and security-oriented, therefore the effects of Russia's domestic security implications and its desire to improve and sustain 'the Great Power' status in the world politics are stressed.

With regards to the effect of one independent variable (domestic security implications) on the dependent variable (Russian foreign policy), few developments need to be taken into account. It was argued that the Arab revolutions have drastically changed the situation not just in the Middle East, but also globally (Malashenko, 2013). The revolutions intensified the confrontation between Russia and the Western countries (the US and its EU allies in particular). The Arab Spring also gave impulse for legitimation of the 'Islamism' in the Muslim world, which forms one of the major Russia's concerns. As Russian analyst Georgy Mirsky said, the "Arab world is a testing ground for the radical political Islam" (Mirsky, 2013). It is true that the Arab Spring revolutions have serious domestic implications for Russia. According to Alexey Malashenko, "the triumph of the 'Islamism' in the Arab Spring has resonated with the Russian Muslim population and encouraged development of the opposition movements within the community" (Malashenko, 2013). There is a common thought that the victories of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamist Ennahda Party in Tunisia, as well as the participation of the 'Islamists' in the Libyan new government and their growing activeness in general, gave the Russian Muslims the impression that these 'Islamists' could potentially become their allies (Malashenko, 2013; Matynyuk, 2012). The success of 'Islamists' abroad, and especially the Muslim Brotherhood, also raises the question of the attitudes toward

the Islamic opposition within Russia itself. As Malashenko (2013) argues, the wave of protests and demonstrations followed immediately. The protesters called for the overthrow of the Russian government in the city of Kazan in August 2012, as well as during the demonstration in Dagestan in February 2013. Overall the Arab Spring revolutions and subsequent rise of 'Religious Extremism' marked an increase in terrorist activities in Russia, for example: the assassination of mufti, Ildus Faizov, and Islam's main ideologue in the Volga region, Valiulla Yakupov, in Kazan, July 2012; general raise in the 'Islamists' activity in the Republic of Bashkortostan (Malashenko, 2013; Malashenko, 2013; Suleimanov). A further change in the Middle East countries quite possibly can strengthen the 'Islamist' activities across the Russian regions and destabilize the domestic security situation in the country in general. This matter is discussed more in subsequent chapters.

Another serious concern Russia has with regards to the 'Islamist' activities in the Arab Spring and Syria in particular, is mainly evolves around the fact that many 'Islamists' from Russia are taking part in the Syrian conflict on the side of so-called Islamic State. As the President of the Religion and Society Information and Analysis Center, Alexey Grishin points out, "Middle Eastern Islamists are providing tangible support to their coreligionists in Russia" (Grishin, 2012). This support might evolve into direct sponsorship of the Islamists' activities on the territory of the Russian Federation, where numerous Muslim populations live. The situation in Chechnya, which was the main source of instability in the region for years, at the moment is quite stable, however, how Macej Falkowski (2014) observes, it is to a great extent an illusion. A serious economic or political crisis in the Russian Federation might cause 'unfreezing' of the Caucasian problems, which may explode with a new strength (Falkowski, 2014). It is also outlined by Suchkov (2014), that 'Islamists' in

the Caucasus have significant ties and find inspiration in the Islamic State (IS), which has particular plans involving the Russian Caucasus in the future. In such a way, one of the purposes of Russia's policy in Syria is to stop the spread of 'Religious Extremism' and foreign fighters from the Middle East to Russia. Therefore, Russia's concerns regarding the 'Islamists' in the Middle East and their effect on the Russian Muslim populated regions don't seem groundless.

2.4 CONSTRUCTIVISM AS THE THEORY EXPLAINING HOW THE NATIONAL IDENTITY FORMS RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

This chapter explains how the Constructivist theory forms the argument that Russian foreign policy in Syria is also identity-based. This chapter starts with a general discussion of the Constructivist theory evolution and then outlines main arguments of Constructivist theory, which, help to build the argument of the thesis. This chapter proves a hypothesis that one of the key sources of Russian foreign policy in Syria is the desire of Russian political establishment to re-build and sustain 'the Great Power' identity in the Middle Eastern region in general, and in Syria in particular. Constructivist theory is also used because it better explains both the emergence of the phenomenon of the Russian identity and its instrumental use by the political elites in the foreign policy decision-making.

The Cold War challenged the mainstream theorizing in the International Relations and forced the scholars to re-evaluate the main approaches in the field. As argued by Jackson and Sorensen (2010), it soon became clear that the Neorealist theory is not clear about the future developments of the balance of power. Perhaps the crisis in the Realist theory served as a catalyst for the Constructivist theory development.

Some scholars (Pass, 2004) tie the emergence of the Constructivist theory with the names of a Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget, and a Russian psychologist and philosopher in the 1930's Lev Vygotsky. If the former develops cognitive Constructivism, the later is most often associated with the Social Constructivist theory based on social interaction, which plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition. However, as noted by Jackson and Sorensen (2010), Constructivism has rather deeper roots. It also grows out of the old methodology that can be traced back at least to the 18th-century writings of the Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668–1744), and the British idealist philosopher George Berkeley (1685-1753). Ernst von Glasersfeld contends, "Vico changed the concept of human knowledge by saying that the natural world is made by God, but the historical world is made by Man" (Glasersfeld, 2007, p. 91). It seems that by saying that, Vico supposed that history is created by men and women rather than being some kind of unfolding or evolving process that is external to the human affairs. Moreover, as mentioned by Jackson and Sorensen, "states are artificial creations and the state system is artificial too; it is made by men and women and if they want to, they can change it and develop it in new ways" (Jackson and Sorensen, 2010, p. 162). British Philosopher George Berkeley, developed a theory of so-called 'immaterialism', which denies the existence of material substance, contending that some familiar objects "are only ideas in the minds of perceivers" (Armstrong, 1989, p. 34; Atherton, 1990, p. 110). Nevertheless, Onuf was the first theorist, who introduced the term 'Constructivism' in the field of International Relations in 1989. According to the argument offered by Onuf, states, much the same as individuals, are living in a "world of our making" (Onuf, 1989, p. 15), where many entities such as 'social facts' are made by human action, as opposed to "brute facts, that do not

depend for their existence on human action but rather are phenomena of human condition" (Searle, 1995, p. 67). Although Onuf was the one who introduced the concept in the field of International Relations, Wendt developed it into a uniform theory, which questions on the key assumptions of Realism and Liberalism.

It is worth saying that Constructivism is critical of the International Relations theory in general, and its contemporary structural variants, Neorealism and Liberalism, in particular. Kowert contends that both Neorealism and Liberalism "are poorly equipped to explore normativity in international politics" (Kowert, 2001, p. 158). According to Tsygankov (2005), there are two problems with Realist and Liberal understanding of foreign policy. First, both theories tend to emphasize one aspect of the international system at the expense of others (Tsygankov, 2005, p. 12). Secondly, both Realism and Liberalism are ethnocentric in the sense that they view Russia's foreign policy through similar Western culture and do not sufficiently pay attention to the Russian indigenous history and system (Tsygankov, 2005, p. 12). When it comes to the analysis of Russian foreign policy, it seems to be a mistake to dismiss the Russian identity. The reason for such an assumption is that Russian foreign policy in many ways seems to be inherently identity-based. This issue is explained in details in subsequent chapters through a historical background.

The Constructivist theory developed by Alexander Wendt (1999) mainly challenges the most dominant at that time the Realist theory, in particular, the main Realist assumption stresses the primacy of anarchy and the distribution of relative power (the Materialist Ontology) in the world politics. Wendt labels Waltz's Neorealism as "individualist and materialist" because it "misses what is often a more determinant factor, namely, the intersubjectively shared ideas that shape behavior by

constituting the identities and interests of actors" (Wendt, 1999, p. 35). In other words, as noticed by Jackson and Sorensen, "the well-known 'billiard ball image' of the international system is rejected by Constructivists because it fails to reveal the thoughts, ideas, and beliefs of the actors involved in international conflicts. Constructivists want to probe "the inside of 'the billiard balls" in order to gain a deeper understanding of such conflicts" (Jackson and Sorensen, 2010, p. 162).

Another core argument of Constructivism is built on objecting the Neorealist argument about the anarchy. In his famous article of the early 1990s, Alexander Wendt argued that self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy, therefore self-help is a result of a process, rather than structure (Wendt, 1992, p. 394). In other words, self-help and power politics are institutions, not essential features of anarchy. According to Wendt, anarchy is more "what states make of it" (Wendt, 1992, p. 395). Thus, Constructivist argument mainly rests on an assumption that a structure of the international system is primarily social rather than material.

According to Kenneth Waltz, "what matters is only the number and power of states" (Waltz, 1986, p. 70). If one follows that materialist logic, structural changes are seen in terms of changes in the number and power of states in the international system. Wendt (1999) contends that such logic explains the structural change only in one sense. Constructivism defines the political structure as a social rather than material phenomenon. According to Alexander Wendt, "the Ontology of international life is idealist and holist", therefore "structures of the human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces and identities, and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared

ideas rather than given by nature" (Wendt, 1999, p. 310). To Constructivists, the social world is not something that is given: it is not something 'out there' existing independent of the thoughts and ideas of the people involved in it (Wendt, 1999; Hopf, 1998). Conversely, according to Constructivism, a social world is a world of human consciousness: of thoughts and beliefs, of ideas and concepts, of languages and discourses, of signs, signals and understandings among human beings, especially groups of human beings, such as states and nations. Moreover, according to Constructivism, such a social world can only be understood in contexts of everyday interactions and socio-historical development. Moreover, in the world of human interactions, beliefs and emotions are often behind decisions. Therefore it might well be suggested that foreign policy action is a social phenomenon and cannot be adequately understood without fully exploring the context in which it is formed. This idea is also advocated by Roxanne Doty (1996), Ted Hopf (1998), and Peter Katzenstein (1996).

Following the Constructivists logic, structured by Wendt, "each actor has many identities linked to institutional roles; these identities are a basis of interests" (Wendt, 1999, p. 398). In other words, interests presuppose identities because an actor cannot know what he wants until he knows himself. Therefore, identities become crucial in the Constructivist analysis because they provide the basis for interests. How it is argued by Wendt (1999), actors do not have "the portfolio of interests", instead they define their interests in the process of social interaction. Constructivists also focus on constitutive processes and argue that identities are always in the process of being formed and reformed. As Christian Reus-Smit mentions, "this emphasis on identity formation differs from the rationalists' approach which takes interests and identities as pre-given" (Reus-Smit, 2001, p. 209).

Despite the popularity of the Constructivist approach in the International Relations theory, it is still criticized by many scholars. According to Yücel Bozdaglioglu (2007), the major critics come from the Realist school, which blames Constructivism for being empirically and methodologically wrong. This group is mainly represented by Barkin (2010), Zehfuss (2001), Copeland (2000). Other criticism is mainly targeted at questioning the nature of Constructivism. In particular, it is said that Constructivism is not a theory, but a "research program that supplements Realism rather than supplanting it" (Desch, 1998, p. 141). Houghton (2007), for instance, suggests that Constructivism does not form a single unified perspective, but rather constitutes a general social scientific framework, which is not a 'theory' as such. Fred Chernoff even calls Constructivism "a mostly interpretive metatheory stemming from the works of such philosophers as Wilhelm Dilthey, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and R. G. Collingwood" (Chernoff, 2008, p. 68). Finally, other critics (Jackson) contend that a growing body of research on Constructivism shows that the problem with contemporary Constructivism is that it was initially dominated by Liberalism and Idealism (Jackson, 2004, p. 337). Despite the critics, Constructivism has proved to be useful in contemplating the foreign policy analysis.

The author's understanding of Russian foreign policy goes along with Andrei Tsygankov's (2014) postulate that contemplation of the Russian foreign policy analysis requires exploring an identity-based interpretation of a state's international behaviour, as all national governments are, to a certain extent, open to the influence of ideas across the political and intellectual spectrum. In this thesis, the author tests the hypothesis of Russian foreign policy being identity-based. Chapter III of this thesis is devoted to discussing this point in details.

It is also essential to determine the concept of the national identity, and its sources, although it has proved to be rather complicated. As Phillip Gleason noticed, "the meaning of identity as we currently use it is not well captured by dictionary definitions, which reflect older senses of the word" (Gleason, 1983, p. 910). The same holds true for the Russian national identity concept, which, is noticed by Ponsard to "lack any commonly agreed definition" (Ponsard, 2006, p. 6). The author agrees with Lionel Ponsard (2006), that the Russian identity is based on what are traditionally considered as the fundamental components of the identity concept, namely history, geography, ethnicity, culture, and religion. It is also argued (Likhacheva, 2014) that, Russia has always been characterized by cultural and national openness, which became the foundation of the multi-ethnic state of the Russian civilization. Moreover, there seems to be a significant link between Russian geographical position as a Eurasian power in the world and its national identity. Ponsard (2006) recalls to famous Russian writers, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Alexander Solzhenitsyn, who argued that the Russian land is the symbol of the Russian identity. According to them, "the Russian steppe, the Siberian taiga, and the peasant villages are all inherent features of this identity" (Ponsard, 2006, p. 8). Moreover, it is contended by a number of scholars (Sakwa, 2009; Isakova, 2004; Krejci, 2007), that Russia has the unique geographical and geopolitical position, as its land stretches across both Europe and Asia. In the present research, the author suggests adding two components into the concept of the Russian identity, which is economy, and the political leadership as two additional components of the Russian identity.

Russian identity today is in many ways the product of historical determinants. Throughout its historical evolution, Russia had a strong belief in its 'exceptionalism'.

Even after the demise of the USSR in 1991, which in many ways was a landmark event for Russian domestic and foreign policies, Russia continued representing itself as a powerful member of the international society. This tendency improved significantly with Vladimir Putin appointment as the President in 2000. In the thesis, it is argued that under the rule of Vladimir Putin the 'exceptionalist' ideology has been formed. This matter is discussed more in chapter III of this thesis. One of the components of this ideology is 'the Great Power' identity, and, according to 'exceptionalist' ideology, such an identity needs to be improved and sustained both domestically, and internationally. The quite similar idea is developed by Angela Stent (2013), who believes that under Putin, Russia developed a new national idea, largely based on the traditional nationalism and the Orthodox Church, one that stresses Russia's unique path as a 'Great Power' and rejects the Western definition of democracy and human rights.

Russia's support to Assad also to great extent is formulated by a logic of supporting Russia's allies. Russia's friendship with Syria dates back to the Soviet Union time. Since then two states developed quite stable and trustful relations, including military and economic cooperation, as well as cultural bonds. This topic is discussed in details in chapter VI, part 6.2. Supporting loyal allies to great extent forms part of Russian national identity. In this regards, Syria hasn't become an exception. From the beginning of a conflict in Syria, Russia has played a strategic role in mediating the crisis. Such a status, on the one hand, significantly sustains Russia's image on the international stage. On the other hand, a certain sense of honor is formed by fulfilling the mission to help its most loyal Russia's allies. This argument is propagated by former Russia's UN Ambassador Vitaly Churkin, who stated in his interview for Foreign Policy journal that: it is "a matter of national honor to stand up

for Russia's friends" (Lynch, 2015). He also added that "being a Russian diplomat, for us, if you have good relations with a country, a government, for years, for decades, then it's not so easy to ditch those politicians and those governments because of political expediency" (Lynch, 2015). In Syria, for about four years since the beginning of the conflict, the Russia's position remained essentially unchanged and was limited essentially to diplomatic support. However, in September 2015, Russia resourced for a military intervention, by which invoked further political opposition by the US and its European allies. This matter is discussed in more details in chapter VI, part 6.3.

CONCLUSION

The intellectual debate concerning the nature of the Russian civilization and Russian foreign policy remains quite intense. Different scholars propose different theories explaining the Russian foreign policy approach. This chapter shall be seen as an attempt to systematize all theories, which have been used through times for the analysis of Russian foreign policy and the nature of Russian politics in general. It is offered to divide those theories into five broad groups: mainstream approaches, ideology-driven approaches, Nationalist approaches, Geopolitically-oriented approaches; and Western-oriented approaches.

The group of mainstream approaches basically serves as an umbrella uniting basic theories of International Relations, such as Realism, Liberalism, and Constructivism. All these theories can be used as a theoretical approach to analyzing different aspects of the Russian foreign policy. However, in this thesis, the author uses a synthesis of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism as the theoretical background. In particular, Neoclassic Realism is used for explanation of

security-oriented Russian foreign policy in Syria, while Constructivism serves as a theory for analysis of identity-based Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria.

In an analysis of Ideologically-driven approaches, the main focus is made on a case of the Soviet Union, and the Marxist-Leninist ideology, which dominated the Soviet domestic and foreign policies at that time. It is also proved that ideologically-based approaches for the Russian foreign policy analysis haven't lost their applicability in modern Russia. In particular, it was contended that contemporary ideologically-driven approaches in Russia unite Neo-Communists, who are mainly represented by the Communist Party and its leader Gennadi Zyuganov.

When it comes to the Nationalist approaches, they are presented through the prism of a scholarly debate between Slavophiles (Pan-Slavists) and Westernizers. It is outlined that these two theoretical currents disagreed on the nature of the Russian civilization. It is also contended that the Slavophile philosophy was not abandoned in later years, and in the 20th century was represented by the Civilisationist school, and in the 21st century – by the Nationalists and mainly by their so-called 'radical' wing, Neo-Imperialists. In this chapter, It is also outlined other main concepts, which were offered in Russia within the body of the Nationalist approaches, including the concept of 'liberal empire' by Anatoly Chubais, and the concept of 'sovereign democracy' by Vladislav Surkov.

Within the group of the Western-oriented approach to Russian foreign policy, the author discusses the Westernizers' philosophical approach, which is, by its nature, opposite to the one proposed by Slavophiles in the 19th century, and the Atlanticist approach, which was mainly promoted in Russia by Mikhail Gorbachev and Andrey Kozyrev between 1980s and throughout 1990s.

The Eurasianist school of thought is also addressed and mainly represented it in connection with the names of Yevgeny Primakov and Aleksandr Dugin.

This chapter also outlines a methodological approach and a method of the present study. With regards to the methodological orientation of this thesis, it is explained how a theoretical synthesis of Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism is applied as a conceptual framework of the present study. A problematic nature of a theoretical pluralism in the field of International Relations is also addressed, as well as the limitations during its use in the present analysis. The reasons to chose a theoretical synthesis over an analytic eclecticism for the present research project were explained.

This chapter also outlines an orientation with regards to methods of a research. It is explained why the study doesn't include interviews, and why the focus is made mainly on a political discourse analysis, and a content analysis. It also addresses the problems and limitations connected with a discourse analysis, including problems with terminology, the application of a discourse analysis in the research and a general procedure of using a discourse analysis as a method of research.

The last two parts of this chapter explain the choice of synthesising Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism for analysing Russian foreign policy in Syria. In both parts, the knowledge of both the Realist school and the Constructivist school is systematised. Moreover, the evolution of the Realist theory from Classic Realism into Neoclassic Realism is demonstrated. In the Part dedicated to Constructivism. It explains why it has been chosen as a theoretical base for explaining the phenomena of the Russian national identity. It also argues how the Russian national identity, and the sense of 'Great Power' affect Russian foreign policy in Syria.

CHAPTER III. IDENTITY-BASED RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

3.1 PHENOMENON OF THE RUSSIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

The term identity is complex. The definition proposed by the Valdai Group represents the national identity as "a sense of belonging to a certain state or nation, which is shared with a group of people regardless of their country of citizenship" (Valdai Discussion Club Report, 2014). When it comes to defining the Russian national identity, a few matters need to be addressed. Firstly, as Vera Tolz argues, that Russia's nation-building process, which represents the search to define the "us" and the "other" of the Russian state, has always been and remains a priority for the Russian political and intellectual elites in the post-Soviet era (Tolz, 2004, p. 160). Nevertheless, most part of the Russian history there was a certain ambiguity in regards to the distinct Russian identity. Ilya Prizel outlines historical tendency of differentiation between *'rossiskii'* (of the lands of Rus) and *'russkii'* (ethnic Russian)" (Prizel, 1998, p. 164). The equation of the terms *'narod'* (the people) with *'gosudarstvo'* (the state) also reflects this ambiguity (Prizel, 1998).

In general, the sense of the national identity plays a vital role in the formation of foreign policy. As argued by Prizel (1998), a sense of the nation and the national identity helps to define the parameters of what a polity considers its national interests at home and abroad. Ted Hopf confirms this thesis by saying that, "identities tell others who you are and tell you who others are, and in doing that, identities imply a particular set of interests or/and preferences with respect to choices of action" (Hopf, 1998, p. 171). In case of Russia, 'Great Power' identity forms certain choices when making foreign policy decisions. In particular, in many

official speeches of key Russian politicians, there is a stress on Russia pursuing so-called sovereign foreign policy. By this, Russian officials try to demonstrate an independence in foreign policy-making, and that Russian foreign policy decisions mainly serve to satisfy Russian national interests.

Overall, the Russian identity is a complex phenomenon. Moreover, it is argued (Ponsard, 2006), that the notion of the Russian identity still lacks any commonly agreed definition. Nevertheless, it seems possible to define the Russian identity based on its unique characteristics. Among these characteristics Ponsard (2006) suggests to include some fundamental components of the identity concept, namely history, geography, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Below these components are discussed in more details.

Geography

According to Bobo Lo (2015), geography is the component that contributes to the Russian political culture. Ponsard (2006) also agrees that there is a certain link between a geographical position in the world and the national identity. It is true that geography defined Russia as one of the world's leading powers since the mid-18th century. Overall, Russia's geographical size, and the fact that the country stretches "almost the length of Eurasia" (Lo, 2015, p. 102), affects Russia's self-perception of being a Eurasian power and significantly nurtures the sense of 'Greatness' in the Russian identity. Territory, as a component of the Russian identity, is also problematic though. Such a problematic nature results from a debate on whether Russia belongs to Asia or Eurasia (Bassin, Glebov, Laruelle, 2015; Szvak, 2010; Goodrich, 2008; Bell, 2002). It is worth saying that the origins of the Eurasianist school are rooted in this debate.

Multiplicity of ethnicities & nationalities

Throughout history, Russia has been a multi-ethnic state and remains so in modern times. Nowadays the Russian Federation is a very ethnically mixed state and comprises of more than 100 distinct nationalities and several of the world's major religions. As Bobo Lo contends, "Russia is not European or Asian, Christian or Muslim, it is all those things" (Lo, 2015, p. 105). Such a development offers a perspective to see the nature of the Russian national identity as 'chameleonic'. This idea finds a confirmation in practice of the Russian political establishment. For example, it was argued (Lo, 2015), that President Putin quite often exploits the so-called "transcending nature" of the Russian identity for concrete ends. In particular, he stresses Russia as a part of the European civilization when it is engaged with the EU while emphasizing Russia's Asian identity when cooperating with the Asian countries (Lo, 2015, p. 105). Such a 'double-faced' nature of the Russian national identity in many ways forms part of its 'exceptionalist' ideology in today's Russia.

Russia, from its earliest days as a state, has always been a multinational conglomerate. Even the Ancient Rus' between the 9th to the 13th centuries brought together around 22 different nationalities. As found by Sakharov (1998), the Muscovite state incorporated lands inhabited by people of various linguistic groups. Since the 16th and 17th centuries, the centralized Russian state included the Volga Khanates, Siberia, part of the Northern Caucasus - all inhabited by numerous nationalities, and also the territory of Ukraine. Imperial Russia completed the formation of a huge multinational state, which included the peoples of the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, the Baltic regions, the South-West lands, Poland and Finland. Some of these lands and nationalities were forcibly brought into Russia. As argued by Sakharov, in each case their entry into Russia was a dramatic one

and marked a turning point in each people's history (Sakharov, 1998). As a result, Sakharov also contends that all Russian governments, from ancient times up to the 20th century, were forced to follow flexible nationalities policies in different contexts in order to maintain the unity of the huge multinational state and, later, the huge empire (Sakharov, 1998, p. 8). That is, however, remains as uneasy task even in modern time, and often works rather ineffectively.

History and historical memory

The basic premises of Russian foreign policy have been shaped by Russia's historical experience. It was argued (Ponsard, 2006), that the Russian identity today is in many ways is the product of historical determinants. The term 'historical determinants' shall be used as an umbrella term uniting important periods of the Russian history (Kievan Rus', Tsarist Russia, Imperial Russia, Soviet Russia or USSR, RSFSR, the Russian Federation), important dates (Adoption of Christianity in 988 by Vladimir, the abolition of serfdom in 1861 and others), the dates of major military battles, as well as dates when some key political decisions or reforms were taken (First Constitution in Russia, first time when judiciary became an independent branch of government in 1864 and others). It is important to say that for a great part of its history Russia was one of the largest and strongest Empires in world history. That fact affected the formation of 'the Great Power' identity. The same holds true for modern Russia. 'The Great Power' identity has become a part of the 'exceptionalist' ideology in today's Russia. As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, the ideology in many ways has become so-called 'a product' of a new direction for Russia initiated by Vladimir Putin. A particular focus of the 'exceptionalist' ideology is made on sustaining of 'the Great Power' identity in

Russia's foreign affairs, rising patriotic mood among the Russian population and improvement of social unity. As a part of such ideology, the 'cult' of Vladimir Putin's personality is carefully created by the Kremlin. As per the author's observation, the Russian political figures regularly stress 'the Greatness' of Russia in their public speeches. It is believed that it has a purpose of affecting the public opinion and bolstering patriotism and a sense of pride among the Russians.

Religion

Orthodoxy also embodied a sense of a nation and identity in Russia. The Russian Orthodox Church played the crucial role throughout the Russian history. During the Tsarist period, the Church was largely exploited in many imperial ceremonies. The monarchs were religious and insisted all people follow their example. As Mark Steinberg (2007) notes, 'the Holy Synod' [a ruling body of the Orthodox Church] was aimed at converting the Russian people and society to a religious form of social thought and action through the wide dissemination of religious reading matter, by sponsoring a network of parish primary schools, and by encouraging the opening of new monasteries, convents, and charitable institutions.

The Orthodox Church was oppressed at the turn of the 20th century. The Soviet regime established atheism, which was followed by the anti-religious campaign, when the church property was confiscated, believers and the church's representatives (bishops, archbishops, and metropolitans) were prosecuted and harassed. Nevertheless, when the Nazis attacked Russia in 1941, Stalin revived the Russian Orthodox Church to raise the patriotic support for the people. Further periods were marked by a gradual revival of the Church and the Orthodox faith. In the post-Soviet era, as argued by Zigon (2013), the Russian Orthodox Church has

re-established itself as one of the most stable and influential cultural institutions in the Russian Federation.

Nowadays, Orthodoxy is the predominant religion of the Russian state. Even though the Constitution of the Russian Federation (Articles 13 and 14, the Constitution of the Russian Federation, 1993) stipulates that Russia is a secular state and that no religion may be established as compulsory or as the state religion, the Orthodox Russian Church occupies a leading public and legal position among all other religious institutions in Russia. The Church enjoys support from the state. Moreover, as argued by Codevilla, the state uses the Church as an instrument of "shaping a national patriotic idea with Orthodoxy as its basis (Codevilla, 2008).

3.2   HISTORICAL CONTINUITY IN IDENTITY-BASED RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

This part is dedicated to providing an evidence base in confirmation of the thesis's argument that throughout the Russian history, 'the Great Power' identity played the key role in domestic and foreign policy-making. The first united East Slavic state, called the Kievan Rus', was founded in 882 by *'knyaz'* [Grand Prince] Oleg. It was from Byzantine, whose center was Constantinople, that the Eastern Orthodox branch of Christianity was introduced into Rus' (Petro and Rubinstein, 1996). It is, however, argued that as the only major Orthodoxy country at that time, Russia "used its religious uniqueness to define the rest of Christendom as the 'other" (Prizel, 1998, p. 32). Prizel also contends, that "by virtue of being the only 'true' Christian country, it claimed the right to project its influence beyond its frontiers" (Prizel, 1998, p. 32).

The sense of 'uniqueness' or 'exceptionalism' was active in later years as well. From the time of Ivan III reign, *tsars* [the monarch] nurtured the view of Moscow as 'the Third Rome' (after Rome, and Constantinople), after which there would be no fourth (Wren and Stults, 2009). Nikolai Petro and Alvin Rubinstein suggest that, although this doctrine was often interpreted as a political manifesto, in reality, it was a theological speculation about the Orthodox faith (Petro and Rubenstein, 1996). Whereas Edward Keenan suggests that the doctrine of 'the Third Rome' was utilized as a justification for the imperial expansion (in Prizel, 1998). The Keenan's (1998) argument that the doctrine was abused to justify the territorial expansion, which was in priority at that time, seems to be correct.

Russia became the empire in 1552-56, when Ivan IV captured Kazan and Astrakhan, incorporating non-Orthodox and non-Russian-speaking people into the Russian state. Although many historians date the emergence of Russian Empire to 1721, at the time when Peter I The Great proclaimed himself the first Emperor of Russia. It seems that a distinct Russian identity started to emerge after the Napoleonic wars of 1812-15 and was also reinforced by the flowering of the Russian music, painting, and literature in the 19th century.

The 19th century also signified the birth of the intellectual debate concerning the nature of Russian civilization – the debate between Slavophiles and Westernizers. Philosophical orientations of these schools were discussed in chapter 2.1. In terms of foreign policy, both Westernizers and Slavophiles were committed to expanding the Russian empire and supported the methods used by Russian tsars in that process. In other words, imperialistic wars were welcome by both groups. For example, the Great Russian writer Fyodor Dostoyevsky stated, "wars were fought in the pursuit of a sacred idea of Russia's Universalist Christian mission that would

ultimately lead to perpetual peace" (in Prizel, 2006, p. 170). Among other famous Russian intellectuals who supported Russian imperialism were: Aleksandr Herzen, poets Aleksandr Pushkin, Bestuzhev-Marlinski, Lermontov, Russian composers Rimsky-Korsakov, Balakirev, Mussorgsky (Prizel, 2006).

It also shall be noted that war played a rather important role in the formation of the Russian identity. By the same token, it affected security orientation of Russian foreign policy throughout years. On the one hand, war always served as a chance to demonstrate Russia's military power and 'Greatness'. Russia, under Peter the Great, ended Sweden's pretensions to the 'Great Power' status. Russia broke Napoleon's power and the Hitler's Third Reich. Moreover, with wars, and subsequent territorial gains, the country expanded its territory. As a result, by the end of the 19th century, the size of the Empire reached about 22,400,000 square kilometers or almost 1/6 of the Earth's landmass (Jahn, 2004). Military victories won over the centuries were also a source of the national pride. Moreover, through wars, the Russians were proud of the fact that their country played an influential role in the World Politics.

Another important aspect of war was that it nurtured and improved a sense of the national identity. As argued by Jahn, the unity of the Russian people was especially strong at the time of war, or at imminent risk of war (Jahn, 2004). It is essential to consider as an example the great heroism of the Russian people at the time of the World War II, as it seems to reach the high point of the unity of the Russian people. However, as Guroff and Guroff (1994) contend, it was also an example of a paradox of the Russian people. Guroff and Guroff explain that "victory over Nazi Germany is the greatest achievement of the Russian people, while the losses incurred are their greatest tragedy" (Guroff and Guroff, 1994, p. 88). It should be noticed that the

Russian leaders often manipulated with the patriotism of the Russian people. For example, Stalin speculated the Russian patriotism to aid the war efforts. Another example is how the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917. In their mission to force the Tsar to abdicate the Imperial throne, the Bolsheviks used the nationalist sentiments as a tool. As Prizel notes, Lenin manipulated nationalism as a tool of weakening the Romanov's dynasty (Prizel, 1998).

The type of political regime affects a foreign policy direction of a state. According to Wallander (1996), the institutions and processes of the political order preclude certain policies and tend to produce other. The term 'ideology' is one, which is more often used than defined though. The Soviet Philosophical Dictionary (1954), calls ideology "a system of definite views, ideas, conceptions, and notions adhered to by some class or political party" (in Hunt, 1991, p. 102). Throughout the Russian history, perhaps the time of the Soviet rule can serve as an example of when ideology fully controlled foreign policy. In modern Russia, as it is mentioned above, the 'exceptionalist' ideology is promoted by the government.

The USSR fall has become a landmark event for Russia in many aspects. First of all, the Russian people saw the ideology of Marxism-Leninism, which dominated their polity for seven decades, de-legitimized. Moreover, they lost the vast territories, which for centuries were forming the polity and served as a source of the country's 'Greatness'. What is more, the Russians witnessed a disappearance of 'the Great Empire' status, which has been part of the national identity since the 16th century. In this way, the Soviet disintegration had the most devastating impact on the Russian national identity. The transformation from the Soviet Union into the Russian Federation turned out to be a very painful process, and since then Russia has been seeking its new identity in the World Politics (Khrusheva and Hancox,

2006). During the first post-Soviet decade, conceptions of the Russian identity evolved around two key questions. The first was that of a new civilizational location. As it was mentioned before in this chapter, the Eurasianist school of thought took its start from that time. Eurasianists tried to fill the vacuum appeared after the demise of the Soviet Union regarding the civilizational location of the new Russian state.

The second question related to Russia's new place in the post-Cold War world. The transformation from the Soviet Union into Russia, as a nation state, was rather a painful process. Russia found itself in a different state in a different world. Despite that, after the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia continued to portray itself as the 'Great Power' (Malinova and Casula, 2010). As Guroff and Guroff observe, "much of today's Russian nationalist movement is a direct response to the loss of this pride and national self-assuredness" (Guroff and Guroff, 1994, p. 89). According to Deschepper (2013), a discourse on Russia's 'Great Power' status can be traced in a number of public statements during the first post-Soviet years. For example, Andrey Kozyrev's (Russian Foreign Minister 1990 – 1996) speeches, such as the one published in Nezavisimaya Gazeta on 1 April 1992, in which he stated, that "Russia is predestined to be a Great Powe"r, or his speech at the conference on the transformations of Russia in the New World of February 1992 (Deschepper, 2013). As Deschepper explains, at that conference he stated that: "Russia is ready to assert itself in the world as the Great Power", and "will stay a Superpower in the domains of the culture, and the human and natural resources" (Deschepper, 2013). Therefore, it seems that the emphasis on Russia's 'Greatpowerness' was one of the key elements in the Russian identity-shaping in the aftermath of the USSR collapse. As Melville and Shekleina (2005) observe, the 1993 Foreign Policy Concept placed the accent on Russia as the 'Great Power', on the need to protect the sovereignty

and unity of the state and the rights of the Russians in the countries where they were now a minority, and on the importance of promoting the integration of the CIS. The discourse on Russia's 'Greatpowerness' was also actively promoted by Yevgeniy Primakov, who was serving as the Foreign Minister between 1996-1998. Primakov opposed the idea of a unipolar world and sought to establish Russia as a regional power within the Eurasia, limiting the influence of the US in the former Soviet states (Legvold, 2007). His approach found support among the Russian elite of the mid-1990s, and it continued to inform Russian foreign policy into the next decade (Govella and Aggarwal, 2011).

As said by Kocho-Williams (2013), by the end of the 20th century, and as Russia moved into the 21st century, the interests were coming into conflict with those of other states. The year 2000 was marked by the appointment of Vladimir Putin as the President of the Russian state. Vladimir Putin's political career began in 1990 when he left the KGB after 15 years stationed mainly in East Germany to become the Head of external relations and later the Deputy Mayor under Anatoly Sobchak, the Mayor of St Petersburg (Polikanov and Timmins, 2004). He was drafted by the Presidential Administration in 1996. Later on, he served as the Head of the Federal Security Bureau and the Security Council. In August 1999, he was appointed as the Prime Minister (Polikanov and Timmins, 2004).

Putin's keynote statement 'Russia at the turn of Millennium' on the 30th of December 1999, acknowledged the material and mental damage of the Soviet-type system for the Russian society and signaled a policy agenda of a societal reconciliation, state reform, and greater economic efficiency. In the speech, he outlined major goals for Russia in the 21st century, such as: "to rebuild its strength, find its own path and become an active participant in the international society in the future" (Putin, 1999).

Putin also mentioned about Russia's predestined 'Greatpowerness'. He specifically stated, "Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence" (Putin, 1999). The National Security Concept (accepted on 10 January 2000) followed the same discourse: "despite the complicated international situation and difficulties in domestic affairs, Russia objectively continues to play an important role in global processes by virtue of its great economic, science-technological and military potential and its unique strategic location on the European continent" (National Security Concept of The Russian Federation, 2000). The Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation also outlined the key foreign policy goals: "promoting the interests of the Russian Federation as a Great Power and one of the most influential centers in the modern world" (Foreign Policy Concept of the Russian Federation, 2013).

Overall, it seems hard to disagree with Aglaya Snetkov who argues that 'the Great Power' mentality is at the core of the Russian national identity. Snetcov contends that in the Post-Soviet period, Russia was depicted as a 'fallen Great Power', but a 'Great Power' nonetheless (Snetkov, 2014). Despite acknowledging that it had slipped down the hierarchy of 'the Global Powers', Russia was still presented in a political discourse as the major world power with a century-old history and rich cultural traditions (Snetkov, 2014). The same holds true for modern Russia – in the official political discourse, despite the apparent weaknesses, Russia is still represented as 'the Great Power'.

During the Putin's Presidency, much of the discussions turned around the concept of 'the sovereign democracy', which was described by Vladislav Surkov as a state, whose goals and methods – both at home and abroad – are made solely on the

basis of calculations of national interests, rather than because of external pressure to conform to behavioral norms (Kommersant, 2006). Under Jeffrey Mankoff, the focus on the sovereignty as a value, coupled with the revival of Russia's economic stability during the Putin years, greatly enhanced Moscow's ability to conduct an independent foreign policy (Mankoff, 2011). There is also a quite relevant metaphor proposed by Trenin in 2006, which depicts the Russia's 'independent' foreign policy: "Until recently, Russia saw itself as a Pluto in the Western solar system, very far from the center but still fundamentally a part of it. Now it has left that orbit entirely" (in Mankoff, 2011, p. 26). This metaphor sharply stresses the new development adopted by the Russian political establishment (in particular the President and the Foreign Minister), in which they no longer try to adapt to the Western interests, and instead try to generate the unique path Russia has chosen to follow.

In present research on the Russian national identity, it is offered to view the Russian Energy sector as one of the components of the national identity. In many ways, the new direction of Russian foreign policy became possible due to the economic recovery in the 2000s. Economy boosted in many ways due to the energy export revenues. The Energy Strategy of the Russian Federation, which sets out policy for the period up to 2030, considers the energy sector as one of the main sources of the country's revenue (Energy Strategy Of Russia For The Period Up To 2030, 2009). It's worth saying that historically, the energy sector has been one of the main sources of the country's revenue, and as such, it contributed to Russia's 'Great Power' status. In the 1800s, oil export revenues tantamount to 7 percent of the export earnings (Geopolitical Weekly, 2013). The amount doubled by late 1920s, and by 1950s rose to almost half of the country's export earnings (Geopolitical Weekly, 2013). Modern Russia's economy also depends heavily on its energy

export. Therefore the importance of the energy sector in Russia nowadays is almost absolute. According to Paris-based Energy Agency (IEA, 2003), Russia possesses 30,5 percent of the world's gas reserves (Lounev, 2011). The oil reserves are also very high. According to the paper prepared by The Institute of Energy Economics, "Russia is the largest oil producer in the non-OPEC countries, and second-biggest in the world after Saudi Arabia" (Komori et al, 2005). In 2013, oil and gas sales accounted for 68 percent of Russia's total export revenues (US Energy Information Administration, 2013). Nowadays, Russian energy exports are mainly targeted to the European market. Throughout the 2000s, Russia was a reliable supplier of energy to the EU, however, numerous frictions took place after a cut-off of gas supplies in 2009 (Leal-Arcas, 2009). Since then, the Russia's position as one of the most important energy players in the world has been questioned. It was even suggested by some scholars, that energy resources in Russia are used as a "political instrument to prompt the political agenda" (Kaveshnikov, 2010, p. 585; Gould-Davies, 2016). Other scholars (Makarychev, 2006) contend that Russia's approach to the energy policy, apart from being politicized, is also highly securitized, in many ways due to the fact that Russia treats most of its neighbors as security challenges. It is true that Russia tends to broaden its political influence by economic means, although such 'politicized' approach to energy policy significantly decreased Russia's economic growth and development. The recent geopolitical crisis happened between Russia and Ukraine in 2014 confirms this point. After Russia annexed Crimea, it found itself in a deep economic crisis resulted due to an imposition of sanctions on the Russian economic sectors by the US and the EU. The sanctions targeted specific Russian oil and gas companies, as well as businessmen and politicians, and, as estimated by some experts, "there is a

potential for further escalations in energy trade relations, which would have negative consequences on the overall relationship" (Gusev and Westphal, 2015). This crisis, however, didn't change the Russia's politicized approach to its energy policy. Instead, the Russian administration reconsidered its energy partners and decided to develop relations with the Asian states. Such policy has become a continuation of the strategy taken by the Russian administration in 2012, which was named by Vladimir Putin as "the turn to the East" (Putin, 2012).

3.3 THE ROLE OF POLITICAL LEADERSHIP IN RUSSIA

In present research on the Russian national identity, it is also suggested to view the Russian political leadership as one of the components of the national identity. This part explains this argument in more details. Firstly, it needs to be said that in the realm of the foreign policy analysis, an impact of personality on the decision-making seems contentious. Nevertheless quite a numerous group of scholars, including Jensen (1982), Hermann (1980), Hart (1991), suggest that a political personality or personalities can be helpful in adding to the understanding of the foreign policy decision-making. In this thesis, it is argued that key political figures play a significant role in foreign policy of any state because their beliefs and thoughts seem to form the general foreign and domestic policies of states. The author agrees with Mikhail Bezrukov's saying that the foreign policy mechanism of each state needs a leader of the unquestionable authority, and without such a leader, foreign policy remains rather amorphous (Bezrukov, 1994). Russia confirms this point by its history, as there is certain continuity in having powerful political leaders as the heads of the Russian state. Since the Christianization of Rus' and until the beginning of the 20th

century, there has always been 'the ruler's cult'. For the Russian people, *'tsar'* [the monarch] has been seen as a saint, who is "close to God, who inspired his actions and words and to whom the tsar is ultimately responsible" (Steinberg and Khrustalev, 1995, p. 17). Many Russian monarchs were illustrated in icons and even buried in or at the church along with other Christian Saints. As argued by Moss (2004), the *'tsar'* was often labeled as the *'tsar batiushka'* [the affectionate father of the peasant people], who unites the Russian people.

According to Tuminez (2000), the tradition of the Russian autocracy entailed a norm locating all political-legal authority ultimately in the hand of the monarch. Foreign policy as well was in the exclusive domain of the *'tsar'* and his close circle of advisors and ministers (Tuminez, 2000). Quite often the autocracy of the Russian leaders transformed into 'the cult of personality'. During the Soviet Union, as it is agreed between a number of scholars (Ryan, 2009, Plamper, 2003), there was 'the personality cult' of Lenin and Stalin, when both were treated as 'the Gods'. Moreover, as noted by Cocks, Daniels, and Heer, "the cults of Lenin and Stalin stand in inverse and interdependent relationship to one another, one cult rising at the expense of the other, manipulated by the contemporary leadership for its own glorification" (Cocks et al, 1976, p. 14). Phillips also adds that 'the cult of personality' was only one of the methods used to mobilize support for the regime (Phillips, 2000, p. 122). The People became accustomed to life with only one political party and with no criticisms whatsoever of the 'Great' leader. Moreover, all spheres of life were controlled by the regime: the Soviet people had to read what the state allowed, see what the state allowed and listen to what the state allowed.

Post-Stalin leaders seemed to have insufficient confidence and coordination of their policies, which consequently followed by the country's stagnation in many aspects

of life. The Gorbachev's rule started with reforms of the political system. Those reforms were represented by the policies of '*Perestroika*' [restructuring] and '*Glasnost*' [openness]. The academic world divided into two camps in the evaluation of the Gorbachev's reforms. One group of scholars, represented by Richard Sakwa (2013), Robert Stayer (1998) and others, support the view that the reforms caused destabilization and became one of the central factors provoking the collapse of the Soviet Union. Stayer even notices, that "large numbers of people look back on this feature of the Soviet economic life with wistful nostalgia" (Stayer, 1998, p. 56). The opposite view is shared by Karen Dawisha (1990), Christopher Marsh (2005) that the Soviet Union collapsed due to long-term weaknesses, and that Gorbachev was actually trying to "breath new life into the decrepit Soviet system" (Marsh, 2005, p. 56).

As the First President of the newly emerged Russian state, Boris Yeltsin had quite a controvercial personality. As argued by Bezrukov (1994), his vague interest in the foreign policy domain and even certain reluctance in determining foreign policy, together with his drinking problem, weakened the Russia's international position even further. Although, there is another opinion on the Yeltsin's policy supported by some scholars (Belopolsky, 2008; Khamidov, 2015). According to this opinion, Yeltsin and his circle (mainly the Foreign Minister Kozyrev) are seen as proponents of the Atlanticist approach and even as those who introduced some liberal developments to the Russian politics. As the proponents of Atlanticism, they and mainly sought better relations with the Western states.

Further changes came with the appearance of Vladimir Putin on the Russian political scene. A number of scholars (Gill, 2013; Ross, 2004; Vaughn, 2016; Goscilo, 2013; Arutunyan, 2014, and others) notice traces of 'the personality cult' of

Vladimir Putin in Russia. As Jason Vaughn (2016) contends, that significant part of such a cult consists of spreading the image of Putin in a notable or attractive context to what extent possible by authorities. This idea is elaborated in details by Helena Goscilo (2013), who claims that the Putin's image is carefully engineered by the Kremlin. According to Goscilo, "adulation of Putin during his Presidency assumed not only ideological, but also sundry identificatory, romantic, and creative forms – all reported and disseminated in the media" (Goscilo, 2013, p. 6). However, not all agree with the opinion that there is a 'personality cult' of Putin.

According to Gill (1984), the term 'personality cult' has a very negative connotation and, in the context of Russia, is typically associated with Stalinism, the repression of civil liberties, and the consolidation of state control. With Putin, the popularity of his personality has reasonable explanations. Anna Arutunyan (2014) suggests that the uniqueness stems from the Putin's personality itself, his background as a military officer, the way he was brought up to power. Moreover, in comparison to other Russian rulers, Putin demonstrated himself being an uncompromised leader, who can "resolve issues by extrajudicial means and instigate repressions where necessary" (Arutunyan, 2014, p. 130). According to Fiona Hill, Clifford G. Gaddy (2015), Vladimir Putin is a man, who's past experiences have clearly informed his present outlook. He is seen as a strong national leader emerged out of a chaos of the immediate post-Soviet period (Cassiday and Johnson, 2013). One of the most important things is that with Putin, as argued by some scholars (Nichol, 2007; Szabo, 2014; Gavrilenkov, 2004), there was a significant Russia's economic rise. It is true that Putin was quite successful in transforming the Russia's economic performance. As a result, following the Bobo Lo's argument, for most Russians Putin has become a symbol of stability, as he represents the promise of a return to

an idealized world of order and stability (Lo, 2008). Lo continues that "for the first time in years there is hope that Russian foreign policy is moving out of the vicious cycle of stagnation and unpredictability that characterized conduct under Yeltsin" (Lo, 2008, p. 1). All this in many ways explains why a majority of the Russian population supports the Putin's policy. According to Levada Center, Putin's approval rating among Russians scores to approximately 80 percent (Levada Center). In the West, however, the attitude towards Putin and his policy is rather controversial. Most common critics fall into the authoritarian style of the Putin's rule (Sperling, 2015; Zimmerman, 2016; Kotz and Weir, 2007). This critic doesn't seem to be groundless because politics in the Putin's Russia can be characterized by the centralization and control of all the three branches of power: legislative, executive and judiciary. The legislative branch is currently dominated by the "United Russia" party, which is widely called "the party of power" (Gel'man, 2013, p. 42), and other parties, which are said to be largely dedicated to supporting the Kremlin (Roberts, 2012).

The executive branch was also reformed to serve the interests of the state, and the President in particular. As a part of this strategy, Putin surrounded himself with a small group of loyal people (so-called 'inner circle'). During a research conducted for this thesis, it was noted that the study on Putin's 'inner circle' presents the matter of a great interest for scholars (Dawisha, 2014; Maness and Valeriano, 2015; Myers, 2015; Watkinson, 2015; Zygar, 2016). According to Michail Zygar (2016), Putin's 'inner circle' consists of so-called 'people of Saturday' and 'people of Sunday'. The latter, as argued by Zygar, consists of the closest friends of Vladimir Putin, who have unlimited access to the Presidential residence in Novo-Ogarevo (Moscow), even 'on Sundays' (Zygar, 2016). While the former – are the members of

the Security Council and other governmental bodies, who are also considered to be the allies of Vladimir Putin, but their visits to the President are limited to certain dates (Zygar, 2016). In this thesis, the author offers a research on some members of 'the inner circle' of Vladimir Putin, which proved to include most powerful men of the Russian business and political elite (or how they often called '*siloviki*'). The list provided below, however, is not full. Moreover, as argued by Monaghan (2015), Russian leadership team appears to be constantly expanding.

- Arkady Rotenberg (the owner of the Stroygazmontazh Corporation (SGM group, the largest construction company for gas pipelines and electrical power supply lines in Russia);

- Igor Sechin (the Head of Russian oil company Rosneft);

- Nikolai Patrushev (former director of the FSB internal security service; now serves as the Secretary of the Russian Security Council);

- Sergei Ivanov (former Defence Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister. Since 2011 – the Head of the Presidential Administration);

- Dmitry Medvedev (the Prime Minister of the Russian Federation);

- Alexei Kudrin (the Finance Minister until 2011; now serves as an advisor on financial and economic matters);

- Sergei Shoigu (former Minister of Emergency Situations; now serves as the Defense Minster of the Russian Federation);

- Vyacheslav Volodin (the First Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration);

- Gennady Timchenko (co-founded of petroleum giant Gunvor, now he heads the private investment company – Volga Group);

- Alexey Miller (the Chief Executive of the gas giant Gazprom);

- Vladimir Yakunin (the Head of the Russian Railways);

- Vladislav Surkov (was the First Deputy Chief of the Russian Presidential Administration (1999-2011) - he was widely seen as the main ideologist of the Kremlin who was the first to suggest the idea of the concept of sovereign democracy in Russia).

- Ramzan Kadyrov (the Head of the Chechen Republic).

In addition, Putin enacted a number of measures to restructure the federal and regional governments. Among these measures were chosen the appointments of individuals to the political office, instead of previously practiced elections. Such appointments are practiced from regional governors to deputies in the upper house of parliament (Federal Council) to plenipotentiary representatives ('*polpreds*') of Russia's seven federal districts (Oliker et al, 2009). Like many aspects concerning the government of Vladimir Putin, the judicial system has also been restructured to defend the interests of the state rather than to operate as an independent branch of power.

Overall, despite criticism of Putin and his policy, there is a growing consensus in Russia and sometimes abroad that the Putin's Presidency brought some positive changes for Russia. Firstly, as argued by Freire (2011), Russia has gradually restored its 'Great Power' status on the global stage. Secondly, the Russian national identity was restructured (Fernandes, 2014). As a part of such a reconstruction, according to Chavez (2011), Putin brought the reconciliation of the Russian state with the Orthodox Church for the first time in 80 years. Thirdly, especially during first years of the Presidency of Vladimir Putin (1999-2008), Russia for the first time since the USSR dissolution has become a vital world economic

player (Chavez, 2011). As Sergei Ivanov mentioned at the Munich Security Conference in 2008: "we don't export ideology anymore - we only export goods and capital" (Stent, 2013, p. 213; Chavez, 2011).

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter has proved to be threefold. First of all, it explains a complex nature of the identity concept in general and the Russian national identity in particular. In present analysis of the Russian national identity, it is suggested to follow the approach suggested by Lionel Ponsard (2006), in which he offers an understanding of identity through the components of the identity concept, namely history, geography, ethnicity, culture, and religion. Further on, each of these components is applied to the case of Russia. At the same time, it is also proposed to add Russia's energy sector and the role of the Russian political leadership to the existing list of the Russian identity components offered by Ponsard.

In this chapter, it is also proved that there is certain historic continuity in Russian foreign policy being identity-based. In particular, it is argued that the sense of Russia's 'exceptionalism' and 'the Great Power' identity have always affected Russian foreign policy, starting from the moment of formation of Kievan Rus' in 882. Such a development was proved to be true in modern Russia as well. Moreover, it is contended that the ideology of 'exceptionalism' has been formed in Russia recently, and improvement of 'the Great power' identity has been suggested to form part of such an ideology.

In the present study, it is argued that the energy sector needs to be considered not as a separate variable, but rather as a part of the Russian identity. In this study, Russian energy sector is limited to particular natural resources, namely gas and oil.

It is contended that historically, Russia's reach oil and gas resources formed a considerable part of the country's export revenue. Moreover, it is proved that Russia's recovery after the Soviet Union fall was partly facilitated by Russia's economic grow mainly due to its oil and gas exports. At the same time, it is also argued that the Russian government quite often abuses the Russia's status as one of the main exporters of energy resources to the EU. As a result, Russia's energy policy quite often is criticized for being politicized and securitized.

It is also suggested to add the role of the political leadership into the list of the Russian national identity components. The author provides a body of evidence in order to prove the impact of personality on decision-making, as well as how key political figures play a significant role in foreign policy of any state. It is also addressed that political leadership historically played a decisive role in the country's domestic and foreign policy-making. Also, it is argued that, in Russia, throughout history, there were periods (the Soviet rule) when the role of political leaders was absolute. In particular, there was a 'personality cult' of Lenin and Stalin. It is also discovered that in modern Russia, 'the personality cult' was said to be created for Vladimir Putin. The author explains why majority of the Russians nowadays support Vladimir Putin and his political decisions, as well as the sources of such a 'personality cult' enjoyed by Putin nowadays. This chapter also evaluates a critical and positive assessment of Vladimir Putin's domestic and foreign policies.

CHAPTER IV. SECUTITY-ORIENTED RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

4.1 THE CONCEPT OF SECURITY IN RUSSIA

The study of foreign policy is diverse and multidisciplinary. The term 'security' can be defined broadly: as economic and environmental, political or military. There is also a differentiation between a security of an individual and a security of a state. As argued by Caldwell (2007), when it comes to a state, security studies add to the foreign policy study, because the national security in many cases is the core component of the state's foreign policy-making. Russia is not the exception in this. As Jeffrey Mankoff notices, "expansion, militarization, and search for secure frontiers have been hallmarks of Russian foreign policy for centuries, as Russian leaders have pursued their quest for international power and influence" (Mankoff, 2011, p. 13). In other words, security historically has been an integral part of the Russian politics.

For quite a long period of the Russian history, security in Russia was the matter of the so-called "collective effort" (Shaposhnikov, 1993, p. 13). By "collective effort" Shaposhnikov (1993) suggests seeing the efforts put together by federal, regional and local government agencies and administrative bodies, by all forces at the disposal of the state, by all social organizations and all citizens. At the same time, as argued by Shaposhnikov (1993), for a long time, the country's security policy was largely shaped according to the ideological dogmas and guidelines. That was true during the Soviet period when the USSR's security concerns were closely tied with its imperial ambitions. After the Cold War, however, a lot had changed in the understanding of security threats to the national security and in the general concept of security in Russia. In particular, there was a shift from the interstate to the non-

state and even the domestic threat perception. Overall, even though the common focus within the security studies used to be made on studying of the external realm of a state policy – foreign security policy, later it has become clear that internal and external security spheres are often interconnected (Snetkov, 2014). Russia, in turn, took a new approach in estimating threats to its national security. In doing so, the Russian authorities concentrated primarily on domestic threats, which in some cases appear to be more imminent than external risks. The general outline of Russia's domestic and foreign security policies are stipulated by a number of key 'security documents', such as the Military Doctrine (2014), the National Security Concept (2000), the Russian National Security Strategy (2015) and the Foreign Policy Concept (2013). These documents were first released in a new edition when Vladimir Putin came to power in 2000 and were updated after that on a number of times. Among these documents, particular attention should be paid to the National Security Concept (2000) and the Russian National Security Strategy (2015). These documents outline the basis principles of Russia's national security policy. Strictly speaking, the National Security Concept, as well as the National Security Strategy, are not legally binding documents. Nevertheless, the documents are important and useful as they address general developments in the field of security and foreign policy in Russia. The documents are based on the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) and the Federal Law on Security (2010) and provide a basic for concepts and doctrines relating to the economic, political, social, military, ecological, and all other aspects of security. The concepts also represent long-term programmes in the security sphere and, among other goals, outline the mechanism to coordinate security efforts domestically and internationally.

The National Security Concept (2000) identifies the national security as "the protection of the individual, society and the state from domestic and foreign threats, which in turn ensures constitutional rights and freedoms, an appropriate quality of life for citizens, sovereignty, territorial integrity and stable development of the Russian Federation, the defense and security of the state" (National Security Concept, 2000). As we see, the domestic threats are represented as the priority over the foreign threats. Among these domestic threats are: "demographic problems, poverty, insufficient health care, terrorism, separatism, radicalism, extremism, organized crime, corruption, and the danger of worldwide pandemics" (National Security Concept, 2000). Terrorism and religious extremism are said to represent one of the most serious threats to the Russian national security (National Security Concept, 2000). The threats to Russia's national security are discussed in more details in part 3 of this chapter.

4.2   HISTORICAL CONTINUITY IN SECURITY-ORIENTED RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY

As it is proved in the previous chapter, Russia has continuously positioned itself as 'the Great Power'. As the Empire, Russia had broad imperial ambitions and, as a result, was constantly focused on expanding its territory and improving its position in the international arena. With the territorial expansion of the Empire, the question of securing the state's borders started playing a key role for the Russian leaders.

The first and perhaps one of the most dramatic tests to the Russian security and integrity was caused by the Mongol-Tatar Yoke, which resulted in the disintegration of the Kievan Rus' as a state. That period is mainly characterized as the rule of the Mongol-Tatar feudal lords over the Russian lands, which aimed at the systematic

exploitation of the conquered country through obligatory payments and predatory raids (Plokhy, 2006). The end of the Mongol-Tatar yoke was put on 11 November 1480 as the result of so-called "Standing on the Ugra River". The battle signified the defeat of the Mongols and appearance of Russia ('*the Muscovy*') as an independent state.

Under Ivan III (1462–1505), the Russian state was significantly expanded due to the process of "gathering the lands of Rus" (Perrie and Pavlov, 2014; Ragsdale, 1996). As agreed by Mankoff (2011) and Moss (2003), subsequent territorial expansion, and the need to administer Russia's vast territories encouraged a development of the powerful state. The development was continued under the rule of Ivan IV 'The Terrible' (1530-1584). Among the most significant territorial gains were the Muslim '*khaneates*' [kingdoms] of Kazan (in 1552) and Astrakhan (in 1556), which extended the Russia's control over the entire length of the Volga rRver (Perrie and Pavlov, 2014; Petro and Rubinstein, 1996). Further territorial expansion to the South and the West was contemplated by Catherine the Great (1762-1796). Catherin's defeat of the Ottoman Turkey and the subsequent Treaty of Kuchuk Kainardji in 1774 advanced the Russian territory to the Black Sea and led to the absorption of Crimea (Petro and Rubinstein, 1996). Other significant territorial gains became the result of the Caucasian war (1817-1864), which incorporated the lands of the North Caucasus into the territory of the Russian Empire (Cheterian, 2011). In total, from Ivan the Terrible to Nicholas II Russia was in an almost perpetual state of war. War played a pivotal role in the formation of Russia's security concerns. As Lawrence Caldwell (2007) notes, the vulnerability of the Russian frontiers induced a seven-hundred-year drive for secure borders.

All territorial gains contemplated in the previous years made Russia one of the largest polities in Europe in the 20th century. It spread over the East-European space from the Baltic sea and the Caspian sea in the South. In Asia, it possessed the whole of the Siberia. As Petro and Rubinstein (1996) argue, all these successful expansion efforts made the territory of the Empire equal to 1/6 of the surface of the Globe. These territorial gains, however, as said by Kocho-Williams (2013), intensified a negative discourse and critics of Russia's imperial ambitions and subsequent policies.

During the Soviet period, Russia continued to place the security at the center of its foreign policy. At that period, the Soviet Union faced challenges from both the East and the West during the 1930s. At the same time, as Alastair Kocho-Williams (2013) notes, despite the security was prioritized, certain controversy remained over how the Soviets hoped to achieve it. Some argue that the Soviet Union was committed to so-called 'collective security' (Fleming, 1948, p. 117; Kocho-Williams, 2013, p. 55; Hoffmann, 2013, p. 165). 'Collective security' was a policy that had at its heart the aim of preventing the war breaking in Europe. The mechanism was represented by a series of bilateral and multilateral treaties. Faced with the growing Nazi hostility and rejection of the Rapallo, Moscow accepted the French-sponsored invitation and on the 18th of September 1934, joined the League of Nations, where it became the leading exponent of the 'collective security' (Petro and Rubinstein, 1996). Russia, however, was expelled from the League of Nations on the 14th of December 1940 mainly due to so-called 'timperialist policies' of the Soviets in regards to the Eastern Europe (Bialer, 1986, p. 196). According to Cox (2013), as a part of the policy, the Soviets carried out a series of repressive moves against the leadership of the Eastern European states. Together with that, the Soviets exported

the Soviet model for government and economic structures of the East European satellites, which "was designed to ensure that Moscow controlled the Eastern bloc, making it part of the Soviet Empire" (Kocho-Williams, 2013, p. 94). As Nikolai Petro and Alvin Rubinstein (1996) also point, to Stalin, security was synonymous with the permanent Soviet military presence, unquestioned political control, ideological conformity, and economic subordination to the Soviet needs.

Stalin's death in 1953 and subsequent de-Stalinization left deep wounds in the Communist system. In the Eastern Europe and the USSR, as it is argued (Cox, 2013), it caused the Communism crisis (Czechoslovakia, 1968; Poland 1980). In the West, however, it raised expectations that the USSR would reform itself domestically and would begin to see the benefits of the international cooperation (Petro and Rubinstein, 1996). These hopes became reality when Mikhail Gorbachev became the First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union in March 1985. As argued by some scholars (Suraska, 1998; Kocho-Williams, 2013), Gorbachev ushered in the new era of what he termed 'New Thinking' in the Soviet politics. According to Kocho-Williams, it encompassed bringing the Soviet system out of what he termed stagnation and decline. The path he saw also was one of economic development and liberalization (Kocho-Williams, 2013, p. 144). In regards to foreign policy, certain changes were marked under Gorbachev. In particular, he exposed the idea of 'the Common European Home'. The concept of 'Common European Home', as Savranskaya recalls, "based on the universal human values, collective security, and economic integration" (Savranskaya, 2014, p. 337). Roberts adds that it was also mainly dedicated to being moved away from confrontation, and signaled a retreat from the arms race and the development of economic ties with the outside world (Roberts, 2005, p. 90). Shortly after coming to power, in April

1985, Gorbachev signaled in '*Pravda*' newspaper his desire to change the situation with the super-powers' confrontation. As argued by Kocho-Williams (2013), the Soviet Union ceased to be the power that the US saw as the threat. At the same time, while these shifts in policy were positively assessed by the West, they also had the effect of undermining the legitimacy of the Soviet power and ideology (Kocho-Williams, 2013, p. 144).

The Eastern Europe had become the most vulnerable part of the Soviet Union at the time of the Gorbachev rule. After the fall of the Soviet rule in the Eastern Europe, the whole viability of the Communism was put under question. On the 18th of October 1991, the Alma Ata Accords were ratified, effectively heralding the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the formation of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (Light, 2002). On 25 December 1991, Gorbachev left office, and the Soviet Union ceased to exist on the 31st of December 1991.

The dissolution of the Soviet Union signified the major change in many senses. Since the demise of the Soviet Union, Russia was forced to go through the period of dramatic domestic and foreign policy changes. The fall of the Soviet Union severely undermined the Soviet influence and authority beyond the Soviet Union. It also left Russia in a deep economic, political, social crisis. The country, which previously enjoyed 'the Great Power' status in the bipolar world, lost that status (Kocho-Williams, 2013; Govella and Aggarwal, 2011). Most importantly, Russia found itself in 'the new world', where the global peace was a prioritized over imperial ambitions. As argued by Snetkov, since the end of the Cold War, there was a rise in the global non-traditional security threats, such as international terrorism, climate change, health pandemics, the energy of cyber security, which has challenged traditional understanding security and the security concept (Snetkov, 2014, p. 23). In Russia in

particular, the concept of security and understanding of the security threats were reassessed. The Security Concept of 2000 outlined the priority of domestic threats over external ones.

Overall, despite the changes Russia has undergone since 1991, certain matters still remained unchanged. In particular, in modern Russia, the security considerations play a significant role in Russian domestic and foreign policy decision-making. In such a matter, modern Russia continues the political tradition of its foreign policy being security-oriented.

4.3   SECURITY THREATS IN TODAY'S RUSSIA

As mentioned in the part 1 of this chapter, the National Security Concept of the Russian Federation outlines the national security as "protection of individual, society and the state from domestic and foreign threats, which in turn ensures constitutional rights and freedoms, an appropriate quality of life for the citizens, sovereignty, territorial integrity and stable development of the Russian Federation, and the defense and security of the state" (National Security Concept, 2000). The document prioritizes domestic threats over external ones. Among the domestic threats are said to be: "demographic problems, poor economy, insufficient health care, terrorism, separatism, radicalism, extremism, organized crime, and corruption" (National Security Concept, 2000). This part discusses these domestic threats in details.

Demographic crisis

One of the most serious threats to the Russian national security nowadays comes from a poor demographic situation. Since the 1960s, Russia's human numbers have

been progressively declining. Among the main causes of such a demographic crisis was a drop in fertility rates. As it is demonstrated by Anatoly Vishnevsky:

"In 1959-1960, the total fertility rate in Russia was 2.6. In the next decade it quickly fell, and by 1960 was held on 2.0. It, however, dropped even lower in 70-80s (1.89), and despite a little improvement at the end of the 80s (2.2), it fell again to 1.89 at the beginning of 90s. During the 90s, fertility rate plummeted even to the lower point (1.39 in 1992)" (Vishnevsky, 1996, pp. 8).

As Nechepurenko (2014) notices, in 2006 during the State of the Nation Address, Vladimir Putin described the population decline as the "country's most urgent problem," and laid out a state-sponsored plan to encourage families to have more children. Mothers were promised to receive childcare benefits of 1,500 rubles monthly after the birth of the first child and 3,000 rubles monthly after the birth of the second. Mothers who opted to have a second child also were eligible to receive a certificate worth 250,000 rubles in three years after the child's birth. The money was allowed to be spent for housing, the child's education, or the mother's pension (Oliker, Crane, Schwartz, and Yusupov, 2009). Financial support (or how it was called in Russia – 'the mother's capital') has been constantly increased in the following years. As Elena Slabodiyan (2016) recalls, by 2016, 'the mother's capital' reached 475,000 rubles' allowance. According to Nechepurenko (2014), as a result of such measures, the Russian population grew gradually.

Another aspect of the Russia's demographic crisis reflects certain ethnic disbalance. In particular, while the number of ethnic Russians drops, the number of the Muslims in Russia rises. As Oliker explains, "the differential in demographic outcomes between ethnic Slavs and ethnic Muslims can be attributed to immigration, higher birth rates among the Muslims, and their healthier lifestyles"

(Oliker et al, 2009, p. 35). At the moment, Russia has the largest Muslim population in Europe. According to Cotte (2012), the Muslims in Russia score to approximately 10-15 percent out of the total Russian population. It has to be addressed that within the body of sources and literature, it is quite hard to find the official data on the Russian demographic composition in an open access. Therefore this thesis is opted for relying on findings of other scholars.

During the present study, it has been noted that there is a quite common tendency among scholars to perceive that such a disbalance in the ethnographic composition of the Russian population as a potential factor for further ethnic destabilization (Judah, 2010; Herd and Sargsyan, 2007). It is quite possible to suggest that the disbalance between the ethnic Russians and the Russian Muslims threatens the Russian national identity provided we consider the ethnic Russian population as a component of the Russian national identity. However, such a suggestion seems rather inaccurate. First of all, it needs to be said that the ethnic Russians, just like the Muslims, both form parts of the multinational and ethnically-mixed Russian population. The Muslims in Russia are also considered as the Russians, as such should be regarded equal to the Ethnic Russians. Therefore the matter of some ethnic disbalance should not be regarded as a threat to the Russian national identity, but rather taken as a demographic development.

Economic crisis

Since Vladimir Putin came to power, the Russian economy has been significantly improved. Annual GDP growth scored to 6.7 percent between 1998 and 2007 (Oliker et al, 2009, p. 45). Russia's strong economic growth made it possible for Russia to increase its prestige in the world politics. As it is mentioned in the

previous Chapter, one of the hallmarks of Russia's economic recovery was the increase in earnings from exports of raw materials (mainly oil and gas). In fact, raw materials have been the only sector that generated most earnings for the Russian economy and remains so now. In many ways, Russia is dependent on the export of its raw materials, including oil and gas prices.

The events of the Arab Spring, Russia's position in the Syrian civil war, the Ukrainian crisis in 2014 – all significantly shook the Russia's International position and negatively affected the country's economy. In particular, the EU and the US introduced the economic sanctions and political isolation in response to Russia's foreign policy in Syria and Ukraine. At first, the sanctions were mainly imposed on Russia's politicians and businessmen, however, later the sanctions were also imposed on certain sectors of the Russia's economy.

Another factor, which contributed greatly to the current economic crisis in Russia, was the fall of the oil prices (from $100 per barrel to almost $15) in 2015 (Stepanyan, Roitman, Minasyan, Ostojic and Epstein, 2015). As a result, Russia continues to sell its oil at an operational capacity, without any increase in the oil production to compensate the lower oil price, and thus due to the reduced profit from selling oil, the county's revenue was reduced. All that led to a decline in the value of the Russian national currency (ruble) and the Russian stock market, as well as a drop of the Russian reserves of gold and foreign currencies. The crisis also touched business, corporate and social sectors.

Separatism and territorial disintegration

The main security documents (the National Security Concept (2000) and the Russian National Security Strategy (2015) reflect the fear of separatism and

territorial disintegration in today's Russia (Celikpala, 2011). It should be said that these fears are not groundless. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russia remained a multiethnic state. Nowadays, ethnic minorities constitute more than 20 percent of the population of the Russian Federation and the minority share of the population is growing. More than 30 million people in today's Russia belong to various ethnic minority groups. These people often speak distinct languages, practice different religions, and maintain diverse traditions. The meaning of ethnicity as a social category and the place and role of ethnicity in public life are at the core of debates about the nation-building in Russia. As argued by Protsyk and Harzl (2013), ethnic nationalists prioritize ethnicity over other matters in their public life. The risk of an ethnically-driven territorial disintegration in many ways is perceived as the principal threat to the Russian domestic security (Protsyk and Harzl, 2013).

Few Russia's regions have a long history of separatism, and these tendencies are vital now. Bashkortostan and its sister republic, Tatarstan, are two of the most wealthy autonomous republics in Russia. Tatarstan declared its sovereignty on the 30th of August 1990, with the Declaration on the State Sovereignty of the Tatar Soviet Socialist Republic. It was the first Republic, which claimed the autonomous status within the Russian state. In 1992 Tatarstan held a referendum on the new constitution, which was declared unconstitutional by the Russian Constitutional Court.

The Bashkir experience with separatism paralleled the one of Tatarstan. Bashkortostan declared sovereignty on the 11th of October 1990, two months after the Tatarstan's declaration (George, 2009). The Kremlin's refusal to recognize the republics' independence was expected. First of all, granting independence to the regions could set off a chain of secession campaigns across Russia. What is more,

both republics were considered to be rich in mineral resources, especially oil, natural gas, iron, manganese, copper, salt, and construction stone, therefore, losing such wealthy regions could have caused serious consequences for Russia. As a result, the Russian federal authorities negotiated a number of agreements with the governments of Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, in particular: the Treaty On Delimitation of Jurisdictional Subjects and Mutual Delegation of Authority between the State Bodies of the Russian Federation and the State Bodies of the Republic of Tatarstan, 15 February 1994; the Agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Tatarstan (On Delimitation of Authority in the Sphere of Foreign Economic Relations); the Federative Compact "On separation of authorities and powers among federal organs of power of the Russian Federation and the organs of power of the Republic of Bashkortostan", 31 March 1992; a Compact "On separation of authorities and mutual delegating of powers among the organs of power of the Russian Federation and the organs of power of the Republic of Bashkortostan", 3 August 1994. The treaties secured for Tatarstan and Bashkortostan the status of sovereign republics within the Russian Federation.

Chechen republic contemplated the most violent separatist campaign in Russia. On the 26th of November 1990, the Supreme Council of the Chechen-Ingush ASSR adopted the "Declaration of State Sovereignty of the Chechen-Ingush Republic". Just like with Tatarstan and Bashkortostan, the declaration of the Chechen's independence was refused by the Russian authorities. Losing Chechnya could have been a costly loss for Russia on a number of reasons. Firstly, Chechnya and the Caucasus region overall were perceived to have an important geopolitical location. Moreover, Chechnya represents the region of the strategic importance for Russia,

mainly due to its Southern borders. Chechnya was also a transit country for oil and gas pipelines from the oil-rich Caspian Sea region to the Black Sea Cost. Secondly, the region historically represented economic value for Russia. As Trenin contends, back in times of the Soviet Union, certain Soviet industries "were exclusively developed in only a few locations across USSR", and those locations were mainly concentrated in the Caucasus, and the Transcaucasia (Trenin, 1996, p. 94). Nowadays, the Russian Caucasus is the region rich with mineral and energy resources, in particular with the Caspian petroleum and natural gas in the region, and the surrounding export channels and pipelines. The resources have been exploited by Russia since the XIX century, with the first oil refinery opened in 1864 in Krasnodar-Krai, and continue to make a significant contribution to the Russian economy in modern time (Karagiannis, 2002).

Chechnya and the Russian Caucasus region are integral parts of the Russian territory and have always been the regions of the great significance for the Russian government. Although the region had a turbulent history. It was forcefully included in the Russian territory in the 19th century. As pointed by Dmitri Trenin, back then the Caucasus became both a 'buffer zone' and a battlefield between the predominantly Orthodox Christian Empire in the North and the Muslim powers in the Middle East. It is important to highlight that the ethnic Russians have always been the minority in the Caucasus region, whereas the Muslims – indigenous population of this region – represent, as pointed by Trenin, the group of people who are "closely linked, both culturally and ethnically" Trenin, 1996, pp. 93). These ethnical differences seem to always represented the matter of great concern for the Russian government, to which maintaining the unity of its ethnically-mixed population is the priority. At the same time, it is also important to note that the ethnically-mixed population forms

part of the Russian national identity. Although according to Yemelianova, "the Russian Muslims urged their a distinct national ideology after the demise of the Soviet Union (Yemelianova, 2002, p. 199). Such a development, according to Yemelianova, in many ways came as a reaction to a pro-Western direction of the Russian politics pursued by the Yeltsin's administration (Yemelianova, 1999). Today's Russia prioritises peaceful coexistence of all its multiple ethnicities and nationalities by the Constitution of the Russian Federation (1993) because that serves as the basis for the Russian territorial integrity and domestic security.

Terrorism and 'Religious Extremism'

During a research made for present thesis, the author has come up with an understanding that terrorism and 'Religious Extremism' represent perhaps one of the most serious threats to the Russian national security nowadays. This topic is also discussed in Chapter V of this thesis.

Despite the domestic threats to the Russian security are prioritized over external ones, the external threats cannot be ignored as well. In the current international political crisis, external threats to the Russian national security have probably become as dangerous as domestic ones. The National Security Concept (2000) outlines the basic external threats to the Russian national security. The main threats in the international sphere are determined by the following developments:

- "the striving of individual states and inter-state associations to lower the role of the existing mechanisms of ensuring international security, above all the UN and the OSCE;

- the danger of weakening the political, economic and military influence of Russia in the world;

- the strengthening of military-political blocs and unions, above all the eastward enlargement of NATO;

- the possible appearance of foreign military bases and large military contingents in direct proximity to the Russian borders;

- the proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their delivery vehicles;

- the weakening of the integration processes in the Commonwealth of Independent States;

- the appearance and escalation of conflicts close to the state borders of the Russian Federation and the external borders of countries members of the Commonwealth of Independent States;

- claims to the territory of the Russian Federation" (National Security Concept of The Russian Federation, 2000).

As we see, in Russia, the perception of external threats to the Russian national security mainly originates from so-called 'desire of particular states to weaken Russia's position on the international stage'. Such a perception results from few developments. Firstly, as some scholars agree, the NATO's expansion has always been perceived by the Russian politicians as one of the most serious threats to Russia's domestic security (Maksimychev, 1998; Assenova, 2003; Shearman, 2014). As recently stated by some members of the Russian political establishment, including the President Putin, the Foreign Minister Lavrov, as well as the head of the Russian Security Council, Nikolai Patrushev, this threat is perceived as the most imminent for Russia (the National Security Strategy, 2015; Putin in TASS, 2015; Patrushev in Russia Today, 2015).

Anti-Russian discourse intensified mainly due to Russian foreign policy in Syria and Ukraine. Moreover, the discourse was also followed by the anti-Russian sanctions

imposed on Russia by the US and the EU in 2014. Such a decision from Russia's Western colleagues was characterized by President Putin as "silly and damaging decision" (TASS, 2016). He also added that such a reaction of Russia's Western partners was "aimed to restrain the abilities of Russia's further growth" (TASS, 2016). In reply to the sanctions, Moscow responded by imposing an embargo on the agricultural products, food and raw materials on countries, which joined the anti-Russian sanctions (Russia Today, 2016).

CONCLUSION

This Chapter provides the evidence-base proving that Russian foreign policy historically has been security-based. The first part of this chapter introduces the concept of security in general and also in an application for the foreign policy analysis. Then it demonstrates how the concept of security has changed in case of Russia throughout its history. It also describes how security is understood in modern Russia either in the official policial discourse and in some political documents. These documents outline the security policy of the Russian Federation as well as determine the main threats to the national security in modern Russia. It is explained that in this thesis the emphasis is made on the following documents for a study of security in modern Russia: the Military Doctrine of the Russian Federation (2014), the National Security Concept (2000), the Russian National Security Strategy (2015) and the Foreign Policy Concept (2013). One of the main developments in the Russian security policy was proved to be prioritization of the domestic security threats over external ones. It is argued further that in modern Russia, the Russian government builds its security policy according to such a

development. Moreover, it is explained that certain domestic security matters affect Russian foreign policy.

In a subsequent part of this chapter, it is proved that one of the political traditions in Russia is represented by the historical continuity in security-oriented foreign policy. The argument is proved by a demonstration that such a development was taking place on different stages of the Russian history. Moreover, this argument is developed further by proving that modern Russia continues this tradition, and it is proved by using Syrian conflict as an example.

The third part of this chapter outlines the main threats to the domestic security in today's Russia. It introduces and analyses each of these threats, including the demographic crisis. It is argued that the crisis had become a result of the population decline in Russia. The chapter also addresses how the government tries to solve this problem. Another aspect of the demographic crisis in Russia is tied with the ethnic disbalance among the ethnic Russians and the Russian Muslims. It is explained why such a tendency takes place in modern Russia, as well as the consequences it might have in the future.

Another threat to Russia's domestic security is represented by the economic crisis. The chapter addresses the problem of the Russian economy being disproportionally-managed in a way that certain sectors of the Russian economy are developed more than others. It also outlines that at the moment, an economic and political crisis takes place in Russia mainly due to Russian foreign policy in Syria and Ukraine.

Among the threats to the Russian national security today, a threat of separatism and territorial disintegration is proved to be one of the most imminent. It is argued that such a threat has become imminent after the demise of the Soviet Union and

with subsequent separatist campaigns contemplated in the 1990s within few regions in Russia.

The chapter commences with outlining another threat to the Russian national security, which is regarded as one of the most serious now – the rising threat of terrorism and 'Religious Extremism'. This chapter doesn't describe it in details, as Chapter V is dedicated to the study of this matter. This chapter also outlines what is considered to be the external threat to the Russian national security. It is argued that despite domestic threats are prioritized over external ones in Russia, in this particular period, external and domestic threats are equally dangerous for the Russian national security.

CHAPTER V. ISLAM IN RUSSIA

5.1 ISLAM IN RUSSIA AND FORMS OF 'RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM' EXISTING IN RUSSIA

This chapter is dedicated to the analysis of Islam in Russia. The first part of the chapter clarifies certain confusion existing in the Russian political discourse regarding different forms of Islam in Russia. It also discusses how Islam in Russia is divided into so-called 'Traditional' and 'Non-Traditional'.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, Russia has the largest Muslim population in Europe, with roughly 10 to 15 percent of the Muslims living within the borders of the Russian Federation (Miller, 2015). Yunus Yilmaz (2013), in his research paper on the Muslims in contemporary Russia, also gives the numbers provided by some Muslim religious leaders. For example, Ravil Gaynutdin, the Chairman of the Council of Muftis of Russia, at the meeting of the European Union of Muslims in 2005, estimated the total number of the Muslims in Russia as 23 million. He also stressed that this number includes only "indigenous residents of the country, not migrants or immigrants" (Page, 2005, p. 3). According to the statistical data provided by Pew Research Center, the percentage of the Muslims in Russia is predicted to increase to roughly 13 percent by 2030 and nearly 17 percent by 2050, with about 20 million of the Muslims in Russia (Pew Research Center, 2011). In Russia, perhaps the most reliable source of information concerning the ethnic composition of the Russian population is composed by the National Servey, which is taking place every ten years. At the moment of writing this thesis, the data of the National Servey was rather outdated, therefore, the data of some independent statistical sources (such as Pew Research Center) was used.

Nowadays the Muslim communities exist in all of the Russian Federation's 89 territorial divisions ('*Federal subjects*') and constitute the majority in 7 out of the 89 subjects of the Russian Federation: Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, Chechnya, Dagestan, Ingushetia, Kabardino-Balkaria, and Karachaevo-Cherkessia. However, the majority of the Russia's Muslims are mainly concentrated in two regions: the North Caucasus and the Volga-Ural region. As observed by Yilmaz (2013), a large number of the Muslim migrants coming mainly from the Central Asian countries. The majority of them enter the country on an illegal basis. These groups remain mostly in the Central Russia and in particular, in Moscow.

Islam has deep roots in Russia. It is difficult to establish the exact date when Islam first appeared in Russia, because as observed by Shereen Hunter, the lands that Islam penetrated early in its expansion were not part of Russia at the time, but were later incorporated into the expanding Russian Empire (Hunter, 2004). According to Ariel Cohen (2012), the Arab invaders introduced Islam into the Caucasus in the 8th century. Shortly after, most people in the North Caucasus were converted into Islam, while peoples at the South, including the Georgians and Armenians, remained loyal to the Orthodox Christianity (Cohen, 2012). Interesting note was made by Yemelianova, that despite the Kievan '*kniaz*' [monarch] Vladimir was lured to adopt Islam as the state religion in 988, he opted in favor of the Greek Orthodox Christianity (Yemelianova, 2003). So Russia had all chances to become the Muslim nation in the past.

It was argued (Hunter, 2004), that until the Mongol invasion of Rus' in 1223, the Muslims and Islam were only distant neighbors and not part of Russia's religious and political landscape. Aitamurto (2015) contends that the first Muslim minorities were incorporated in the Russian Empire when Tsar Ivan IV conquered the city of

Kazan and the Tatarstan in 1552. In the late 18th century to early 19th century, while the North Caucasus region was under the influence of the Persian and the Ottoman Empires, the Russian empire made major inroads into the region. Despite fierce resistance during the Caucasian War (1817–1864), the Russian forces conquered the North Caucasus and incorporated it to the Russian Empire (Cohen, 2012). As a result of the "Russian conquests in the North Caucasus" the Muslims of Dagestanis, Chechens, Ingush, and others were brought into the Russian state (Yilmaz, 2013, p. 104).

'Traditional' Islam in Russia

At present, the dominant view in Russia is that 'Sufism' represents so-called 'traditional' form of Islam (Russel, 2010). At the same time, there is still no commonly agreed opinion among scholars on when 'Sufism' first appeared in Russia. Some scholars (Yusupov, 2010; Shikhsaidov, 1999) claim that since the adoption of Islam by the Volga Bulgars in 922, 'Sufism' dominated the spiritual and cultural life for the Muslims in Russia. Others (Vatchagaev, 1970; Parfitt, 2007) suppose that the 'Sufi' interpretation of Islam was practiced in Russia only since the end of the 18th century.

As observed by Hunter (2004) and Popov (2012), 'Sufism' represents a mystic flow in Islam. Popov (2012) explains that according to such a mystic nature of 'Sufism', the way to God cannot be described in words and is only possible to be understood by hints and spiritual intuition. Moreover, Popov even claims 'Sufism' to be so-called "unconscious" branch of Islam, which is characterized by ethnic-mythological views together with the peaceful and quite passive character of this flow (Popov, 2012). It is, however, needs to be noticed that 'Sufism' is a rather complex current of Islam. It

has multiple sub-currents or schools and is represented by few brotherhoods (or 'tariqats'): 'Naqshbanaya', 'Qadiriya', and 'Shaziliya' (Hunter, 2004). In terms of 'Sufi' sub-currents, Hilary Pilkington and Galina Yemelianova subdivide 'Sufism' into 4 different schools within 'Sunni Islam' – 'Hanafism', 'Hanabalism', 'Shafiism' and 'Malikism', where 'Hanafism' is seen as more flexible and moderate school (Pilkington and Yemelianova, 2003). As Shereen Hunter notes, 'Hanafism' in Russia is considered to have "a cooperative attitude towards the Russian government at both local and the federal levels, and it is mainly targeted at gaining recognition for Islam as the component of Russia's cultural heritage" (Hunter, 2004, p. 80). In the modern political discourse, the Russian politicians use the wording 'traditional form of Islam' when they discuss 'Sufi Islam', and mainly 'Hanafism'. However, Malashenko (2013) contends that 'Hanafism' was initially followed by the Bashkirs and Tatars, while the Muslims in the North Caucasus followed 'Shafiism'. Although Hunter (2004) argues that 'Hanafism' is the dominant form of 'Sufism' either for the Muslims in Bashkortostan and Tatarstan, as well as for the Muslims in the North Caucasus. Moreover, according to Shereen Hunter, 'Hanafism' is considered to be the position of the official clergy of the Russian Muslim, including the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and the European Countries of the CIS and the Russian Council of Muftis (Hunter, 2004).

The complex nature of 'Sufism' is also represented by its brotherhoods. According to Hunter (2004), historically the mainstream Islam in Russia was dominated by 'Sufi' brotherhoods, notably 'Naqshbanaya', 'Qadiriya', and 'Shaziliya.' According to Vahid Akaev, in Russia, 'Sufism' exists only in the form of 'Naqshbanaya' and 'Qadiriya' brotherhoods (Akaev, 2009, p. 66). As argued by Vatchagaev, the 'Naqshbandi' and 'Qadiriya' brotherhoods appeared in Russia in the 19th century. It

was also argued (Vatchagaev, 1970) that, historically 'Naqshbandi' brotherhood served as a support for Muslims, who opposed to the Russian occupation of the Caucasus during the Caucasian War of 1817–1864, but later on opted for a peaceful coexistence with the official authorities. In contrast to the 'Naqshbandi' brotherhood, the 'Qadiri' brotherhood, first promoted nonviolent resistance to the Russian 'colonization' in the 19th century, but later adopted a stance of active resistance towards the Russian authorities (Vatchagaev, 1970).

In much later years, as a part of the atheist campaign initiated by the Soviet administration, 'Sufism' was seriously suppressed (Green, 2012; Westerlund, 2004; Weismann, 2007; Rippin, 2013), although during the 1990s enjoyed a revival in Russia (Green, 2012). 'Sufism' also played one of the decisive roles during the Chechen wars in the 1990s. As argued by Vatchagaev (2014), "majority of the members of 'Naqshbandiya' brotherhoods, and all 'Qadiriyya' adopted a stance in favor of independence" (Vatchagaev, 2014, p. 225). Nevertheless, the Federal authorities managed to find the way to ally with the 'Qadiri' brothers and soon received a significant support by the 'Qadiri' representative – Akhmat Kadyrov (Vatchagaev, 2014). In latter years, Akhmat's son, Ramzan Kadyrov, inherited his father's ideas and even developed them further. Nowadays, Ramzan Kadyrov enjoys a strong backing from the Russian President, Vladimir Putin (Parfitt, 2007). It was also observed by Vatchagaev, that Mr. Kadyrov "elevated Sufism to the level of a cult celebrating Russia's state policy in Chechnya" (Vatchagaev, 2014, p. 229). Overall, in modern Russia, the indigenous mystic nature of 'Sufism' has transformed. As noted by Mairbek Vatchagaev, 'Sufi' structures in Chechnya today are very openly and actively involved in the republic's political life (in Huerou et al., 2014). At the same time in modern Russia, 'Sufism' is seen as one of the main tools

in fighting with 'Religious Extremism' within Russia. As the head of the Muslim Spiritual Directorate of Moscow - Mufti Albir-khazrat Krganov contends that 'Sufism' shall be revived in order to immunize young Muslims in the country against the appeals of the radical Islamist trends (Goble, 2013).

'Non-traditional' Islam in Russia

According to the author's observation, in the Russian political discourse, so-called 'non-traditional' Islam or 'Radical Islamism' is associated with 'Religious' or 'Islamic Extremism'. 'Islamic Extremism', how said by Malashenko, is usually used as an umbrella term for the 'Islamist' currents, such as 'Salafism', 'Wahhabism' and 'Jihadism' (Malashenko, 2010). These 'forms' of Islam were not traditionally practiced in the Muslim-habited regions in Russia and were mainly brought to Russia after the demise of the Soviet Union from the Middle Eastern countries. That is why these forms of Islam are associated with 'non-traditional' Islam. As the author observes, the major problem has always been sourced in differentiating between the 'forms' of Islam in the Russian political discourse. Russian key political figures often equate these terms. On the 16th of September 1999, the Dagestan's parliament adopted the Law 'Concerning the Prohibition of 'Wahhabism' and other 'Extremist' activities in the Territory of Dagestan, and later similar laws were adopted in other republics of the Northern Caucasus. As observed by Walter Richmond, the documents didn't explain what was considered as 'Wahhabism', or 'Extremist activity', these terms were equated in the document (Richmond, 2008). Rather than attempting to understand the distinctive features of 'Extremism' in the Northern Caucasus, the Russian government settled on this equation and even simplified it further: any Islamic movement not specifically indigenous to the region

was labeled 'Wahhabi' or 'Salafi', and therefore 'Extremist' (Richmond, 2008). This equation of terms seems to be a critical error and quite often becomes a very sensitive issue in a political discourse. Therefore, it is crucial to differentiate between 'Wahhabism', 'Salafism', their extremist forms, and 'Jihadism', as the terms have different meanings.

It needs to be said that differentiating between 'Wahhabism' and 'Salafism' is not an easy task. Some scholars believe that 'Wahhabism' is a form of 'Salafism' (al-Tijani al Samawi, 2008; Durie, 2013), whereas others equate them (Ronczkowski, 2011; Kabir, 2013). For example, Galina Yemelianova contends that 'Salafism' has become a post-Soviet reincarnation of 'Wahhabism' "based on a wider doctrinal foundation than the teaching of al-Wahhab" (Yemelianova, 2003, p. 185). Those 'post-Soviet Wahhabis' preferred to call themselves 'Salafi.' As Yemelianova also explains, all that had become a result of "the reintegration of the post-Soviet Muslim regions into the Muslim world" (Yemelianova, 2003, p. 186). Another group of scholars (including, but not limited to Scheafer, 2010) differentiates between 'Salafism' and 'Wahhabism'. From the knowledge acquired during present research, it seems to be important to distinguish 'Wahabism' from 'Salafism' for a number of reasons.

As found by Wagemakers (2012), the term 'Salafism' refers to the broad ultra-conservative movement within Sunni Islam emphasizing a close adherence to the model of the 'Salaf' or 'predecessors', who were the first few generations of the Muslims. According to Trevor Stanley, The name 'Salafi' comes from 'al-salaf al-saliheen', the 'pious predecessors' of the early Muslim community (Stanley, 2005). The Islam of the first generations of the Muslims — 'the Salaf' — is considered the purest and most prestigious Islamic current to follow. If a Muslim walks close to 'the

Salaf' in how they live, then they will be rightly guided and on the path to gaining Allah's favor (Durie, 2013). Some scholars (Wagemakers, 2012), when discussing the roots of 'Salafism', refer to the names of Jamal al-Dim al-Afghani (1838-1997), Muhammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) and Rashid Rida (1865-1935). As argued by Sagramoso and Yarlykapov (2013), in Russia, the first underground 'Salafi' communities appeared in several mountainous villages of Dagestan in the early 1970s. But in the 1990s, 'Salafi' ideas received further impetus with various contacts and exchanges that developed with the Middle Eastern scholars (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov, 2013). By itself, this form of Islam does not seem to be violent, however, there is a 'sub-division' or a 'militant branch' within 'Salafism', which I offer to refer to 'Salafi Jihadist.' As observed by John Turner, they aim to return to 'true and pure Islam' through violent 'Jihad' (Turner, 2014). In Russia, 'Salafi Jihadists' are located mainly in the North Caucasus and are those who perceived to be the matter of concern for Russia, and its security, as they see 'violence as a necessary tool for establishing the Islamic rule' (Conant).

'Wahhabism', on the other hand, refers to a specific type of 'Salafism' propagated by the 18th-century reformer Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1766) from the Central Arabian region of Najd. It was suggested by some scholars (Hroub, 2011; Lacroix, 2011; Baraz, 2010), that 'Wahhabism' has become 'the Muslim World's reaction to modernization forced by the Western world.'

Therefore, it should be noted that 'Wahhabi' and 'Salafi' share their strife for Islamic fundamentalism, however, as Joas Wagemakers (2012) contends, they differ ideologically, because of the 'Wahhabi' strict enforcement of their beliefs, their lack of tolerance towards others. Moreover, 'Wahhabism' is recognized (Ronczkowski, 2011) for its strive toward establishing a government based on the Sharia law,

therefore 'Wahhabis' can hardly accept a secular government as a legitimate government. Just like with 'Salafism', 'Wahhabism' has its extreme forms, and propagate violent 'Jihad' as a method of promoting 'Wahhabist' philosophy. In their violent forms, 'Salafism' and 'Wahhabism' looks quite similar, as both apply 'Jihad' as the tool to achieve their goals. At the same time, some scholars see 'Jihadism' as a separate Islamist current.

'Jihadism' is considered to be a separate form of 'Religious Extremism', which calls for 'Islamization' by violent means or through the waging of holy war (Jihad), as they interpret this concept (Hunter, 2004). 'Jihadist' ideas gained credence and a significant number of adherents as a result of the Soviet-Afghan War (1979-1989). According to Balderson (2013), the Afghan war left behind a vacuum of power. That vacuum quite quickly was filled with fractions, like the Taliban. Overall, how Eremenko (2015) argues, the Taliban was born in the struggle to expel the Soviet army during the occupation. After the Soviets withdrew the forces from Afghanistan, the Taliban was actively gaining supporters, and later on, their "Islamist propaganda spilled over the Northern border into the Soviet Central Asia, together with drug trafficking and arms smuggling for the future Jihad" (Cohen, 2002, p. 558). Therefore, as we can see, the war in Afghanistan and subsequent Taliban breakthrough into the post-Soviet space also contributed to the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in Russia.

Also according to Hunter (2004), an offshoot of the 'Jihadism' movement in the North Caucasus is that of the 'Shahidists', whose members celebrate martyrdom as a way of achieving their goals. Perhaps the most common examples of 'Shahidist' attacks in Russia are the hostage-taking operation in Moscow's Dubrovka Theater

in October 2002 and the suicide bombing of the headquarters of the pro-Moscow Chechen administration of Grozny in December 2002.

Overall the terrorist attacks in Russia committed by 'Religious Extremists' provoked the rise in Islamophobia in Russia. At the same time, Yilmaz (2013) characterizes such a development as a reaction to "the flood of Muslims (including those who came to Russia illegally) in the major Russian cities". Others see Islamophobia being a logical consequence of the rise in the Nationalistic mood among the Russian population (Wiginton, 2011; Mayers, 2006; The Washington Times, 2006). St Petersburg and Moscow in particular, have become potential centers of xenophobia and ethnically inspired violence (Yilmaz, 2013). In particular, in 2013, there was an increase in ethnic crimes in Russia in the capital cities (Laine, 2015, pp. 27). The victims of those crimes were for the most part of the Central Asian origin (Laine, 2015, p. 27). The list of the Nationalist groups in Russia is given below in order to support the argument on increase in activities of nationalist and Islamophobic groups in Russia. Among the Nationalist groups in Russia, a few are most commonly listed by scholars:

- The National Socialist Initiative (Natsional'naya Sotsialisticheskaya Initsiativa) is an active group formed at 2009 (Mirovalev, 2015);

- The Russian Imperial Movement - founded in 2002, its ideology represents "Christian Orthodox imperial nationalism" (Shekhovtsov, 2015).

- The Russian National Union - the group supported Russia's annexation of Crimea, and called it "the Russian Spring" (Jensen, 2015).

- The People's Union - founded in 2008, but has evolved from the "People's Will " (Narodnaya Volya) party (Kaplan and Orlov, 2013);

- "The Russians" (*Russkie*) Association, which acts as the successor to the

banned Movement Against Illegal Immigration, which was declared extremist by the High Court of Russian Federation and banned in 2011 (Laine, 2015, pp. 27);

- "Russian Action Coalition" (*Russkaia koalitsiia deistviia) (*Yudina and Alperovich, 2015);

- "The Russians in St. Petersburg" - led by Dina Garina (Mirovalev, 2015);

- "The Motherland" (*Rodina*) party was founded in 2003; the party's ideology is represented by Russian Nationalism and National Conservatism (Jensen, 2015);

- "Great Fatherland" party (*Velikoe otechestvo) was founded in 2013; the party's ideology rests on Centrism and National Conservatism* (Jensen, 2015)*;*

- "National-Liberation Movement" - has the goal to unite everyone in Russia regardless of their political views: the restoration of the sovereignty of the country and liberation from its occupiers (Fyodorov).

Overall, the relationships with Islam and Muslims either within Russia or abroad were said to be one of the main challenges Russia faces both in domestic and foreign affairs (Yilmaz, 2013). The matter seems to be quite complex and very sensitive on a number of reasons. On the one hand, Russia wants to demonstrate its struggles to eliminate terrorism, improve domestic security, and relax ethnic tensions. On the other hand, Russian policies 'against Islamists' (according to the official discourse) are criticized from the perspectives of human rights, because, as it's argued by some Human Rights institutions, quite often the measures contemplated by the law enforcement agencies harm the civilian population of the Caucasus region (Human Rights Watch: World Report 2014: Russia; Amnesty International: Russian Federation 2015/2016; Poulin, 2011).

In recent years, Russia also demonstrates its intention to improve Russia's image and relations with the Muslim world. In 2003, Putin even proclaimed, that "Russia is to a significant extent a part of the Muslim world" (Dannreuther, 2010, p. 17). A significant development took place in Russia's relationship with the Muslim world in 2003 when Russia joined the Organization of Islamic Conference as the observer. As a part of such a policy towards the Muslim world, recently there has been a certain change in a political discourse in relation to Islam. In particular, key politicians have become more careful in using terms related to Islam. For example, in 2008, Vladimir Putin for the first time made a positive assessment of 'Wahhabi Islam' in the public domain. In an interview with French newspaper Le Monde, which was reproduced in the Russian press, he stated that 'Wahhabism' in its original form is a normal tendency within Islam and there is nothing terrible in it (Putin, 2008). But there are some 'extremist' tendencies within the framework of 'Wahhabism', which should be condemned (Sagramoso and Yarlykapov, 2013). In 2009, Yevgeny Primakov, former Foreign Affairs, in his book made a sharp distinction between the Islamic states and the Taliban's form of Islam, which he described as 'Islamic Extremism'. 'Fundamentalists', who observe traditional Islamic rituals, but not engaging in violence, he regarded as not threatening (Primakov, 2009). It seems that a term 'Islamic Extremism' or 'Religious Extremism' should be further used as an umbrella term for extreme forms of Islam in Russia: 'Wahhabi Extremism', 'Salafi Jihadism', 'Jihadism' or 'Shahidism'.

5.2   HOW DID 'RELIGIOUS EXTREMISM' COME TO RUSSIA?

It is argued, that Muslims in Russia have a long history of continuous oppression from the side of the Russian government (Bennigsen, 1989; D'Encausse, 2009).

Some scholars suggest that such a tragic experience of oppression served as a catalyst for the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in modern Russia (Gorenburg, 2006). However, some analysts also believe that such an assumption is groundless (Heathershaw and Montgomery, 2014). There are scholars, who also tie the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in Russia with the external factors. For example, Anishchuk (2013) contends, that Moscow blames the spread of 'Islamism' throughout the North Caucasus on foreign influences in the region. Moreover, such 'accusations' were announced in the official discourse of Russian politicians, for example Vladimir Putin in 2013 (Reuters, 2013), Sergey Lavrov in 2016 (Russia Today, 2016).

Firstly, it seems important to briefly demonstrate historical continuity in the oppression of the Muslims in Russia. As it was said before, until the Mongol invasion of Rus' in 1223, the Muslims and Islam were only distant neighbors and not part of the Russia's religious and political landscape. Islam's introduction to Russia as a result of the Mongol conquest and the Tatar rule affected a formation of rather a negative were seen by the Russians as aggressors, conquerors, and oppressors (Hunter, 2004).

The period from the conquest of Tatarstan, in 1552 by Ivan the Terrible until the coming to power of Catherine the Great in 1762 and further rule of Russian Romanovs' dynasty was marked by a policy of systematic repression of Muslims and the destruction of the Muslim civilization within the Russia's borders (Hunter, 2004). The Bolshevik's revolution took place in a country, which had about 10 percent of the population being Muslims. As Ben Fowkes and Bulent Gokay note, the Revolution intensified so-called 'radical mood' of the Muslim population who's religious rights heavily oppressed by the Imperial Russia, and in this way the Bolshevism was taken by the Russian Muslims as a preferable alternative to the

Tsarist rule (Fowkes and Gokay, 2012, p. 4). Fowkes and Gokay (2012) also stress that despite the Communist's worldview was opposed in principle to all kinds of religious belief, including Islam, Lenin supposed that it was necessary to persuade 'Islamist' movement to join the Communists in the struggle against the Tsarist rule. The North Caucasus Muslims saw the collapse of the Russian Empire and the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 as an opportunity to end a century of occupation, however, it soon turned out that the Soviet oppression of all religious groups in Russia suppressed Islam along with the Orthodox Christianity (Cohen, 2012). However, after Lenin's death the Bolshevik's Party, the Muslim-friendly attitude was abandoned. Perhaps the most severe oppression the Muslims witnessed took place at the time of the Stalin's rule. Malashenko argues that despite the Soviets mainly sought to eradicate Orthodoxy, they also "viewed Islam in the Central Asia and the North Caucasus as a logical consequence of the backwardness of the peoples living there" (Malashenko, 2015, p. 63). Malashenko also adds that the Soviets were sure that the Soviet modernization would sooner or later help the Muslim "aborigines" to overcome their religious misconceptions" (Malashenko, 2015, p. 63). Overall, some stages of the Soviets' anti-Islam campaign can be determined.   For example, Hunter (2004) suggests two stages in Stalin's attitude toward religion in general and dealing with Islam and the Muslim populations in particular. First one was recalled as 'Campaign of Eradication' launched by Stalin in 1928. This attack included the massive closure of mosques accompanied by a large-scale persecution of the Muslim clergy (Hunter, 2004). The second one – 'Limited rapprochement' took place at the time of the World War II. The defense and survival of the Soviet Union became the main objectives and required the unity of all peoples. That affected Stalin's decision to soften his attitude toward both religion

and nationalism (Hunter, 2004). Nevertheless, it is argued (Akhmetova) that, during the World War II, the Soviet Union deported many people of the North Caucasus under the pretext of allegedly helping the German army during its invasion of the Soviet Union.

The period of Khrushchev's leadership is known (Hunter, 2004) for his policy of de-Stalinization. At the same time, he could hardly be called liberal with his attitudes towards religion, as he believed in antireligious programs and supported Stalin in contemplating them. At the same time, in case of Islam, the Soviet Union's foreign policy objectives in the Middle East played important role in determining an approach to anti-Islamic campaigns. In particular, the Soviet Union wanted to expand its presence in the Middle East, and Islam's persecution would not facilitate the Soviet's endevour in the Middle Eastern region.

Under Leonid Brezhnev, the anti-religious campaign acquired less hostile tone. During Brezhnev's rule, the Soviet Union's foreign policy interests led the government to change its attitude toward Islam and made the practice of Islam easier. By the mid-1960s, the USSR had made considerable inroads in the Middle East and was further interested in the expansion of its influence in the Persian Gulf and the Eastern Mediterranean (Hunter, 2004). Therefore, the Soviet's attitude to Islam significantly transformed. The Soviet government also began to encourage limited and tightly controlled contacts between the official clergy and the Islamic world (Hunter, 2004).

In 1988, one year after the official launching of '*Perestroika*' and '*Glasnost*' by Gorbachev, the Soviet policy toward religion, including Islam, changed further. Freedom of religion and freedom of conscience were guaranteed in a series of laws, which were adopted by the USSR and the RSFSR in October 1990. As argued by

White and Bourdeaux, the USSR's Law in 1990 'On Freedom of Conscience and on Religious Organizations' guaranteed the right of individuals to profess any kind of religion "individually or in conjunction with others, and to "express and disseminate convictions associated with hi/her relationship to religion" (White and Bourdeaux, 2009, p. 3). Persecution on religious grounds was banned, and the rights of religious organizations were significantly extended and protected by law (Bennigsen, 1989). The RSFSR law "On Freedom of Religion" (on the 25th of October 1990), reiterated many of the principles upheld in the USSR law, and went even further in protecting individual religious rights, by declaring freedom of religion an "inalienable right of the citizens of the RSFSR" (in Sagramoso and Yarlykapov, 2013).

The end of the Soviet Union in 1991 marked the revival of Islam in Russia. Such a revival resulted in the following developments. Among these, as observed by Malashenko (2013):

- construction of thousands of mosques during 90s;

- establishment of a system of religious education;

- emergence of many Muslim organizations and charities;

- establishment of relations with believers abroad.

Also, as found by Keenan (2013), Muslim students from Russia started going abroad for study, particularly to the Saudi Arabia. At the same time, many Muslim clerics from Saudi Arabia and Turkey arrived in the region. Although such an 'exchange' also had particularly negative consequences for the Russian domestic security. It is argued that 'Wahabi' and 'Salafi' philosophy, which was previously unusual for Russia, flooded Russia's Muslim-populated regions (Malashenko,

2015). As Alexei Malashenko (2013) also notes, these new ideas, which did not match with the ideas propagated by the 'traditional Islam', brought a confusion into the minds and souls of the Muslims in Russia, especially the young people, who found these ideas very attractive. At the same time, some scholars characterize a discourse on Post-Soviet 'Muslim Radicalization' in Russia as a myth (Heathershaw and Montgomery, 2014). However, certain facts speak more in support for those who see Muslim so-called 'radicalization' as a consequence of the Soviet Union fall.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, and subsequent declarations of independence of the former Soviet Republics in the Baltic, Central Asia, and Caucasus, most autonomous republics adopted the Declarations of a State Sovereignty that proclaimed their sovereign status. In 1992 the Republic of Tatarstan held a referendum on independence from Russia, and 62 percent of those who participated voted in favor of independence (Akhmetova). Muslims living under the Russian control for several centuries were not an exception. In October 1991, Chechnya declared its independence from Russia, which the provoked invasion of the Russian federal troops in the region. Since that time, for almost 10 years, the region was involved in the war between the Chechen separatists and against the Russian Federal government. It is, however, very important to notice that the two Chechen wars had different nature. In the first Chechen War (1994-1996), Russian federal forces attempted to seize control over de facto 'independent' Chechnya, which ended in humiliating defeat for the Russian forces in 1996. Whereas the Second Chechen War (1999-2000) is argued to be marked with Islamisation of the conflict, which opened up a fierce sectarian fight between 'Sufism', and violent 'Islamic Extremists' ('Extremist Wahhabism', 'Salafi Jihadism') (Falkowski, 2016; Knysh, 2007; Smirnov, 2008). In other words, as Vakhit Akaev

puts it, the Chechen nationalism and separatism were replaced with 'Islamic Extremism (Akaev, 1999). The 'Islamic Extremists' movement started to increase in numbers especially by recruiting jobless and often spiritually indifferent young people (Akaev, 1999).

'Sufi' Islam, existing in Dagestan, Chechnya, and Ingushetia, was regarded by 'the Islamists. As a delusion and a deviation from the rules of pure Islam, of which they claim to be the only followers. The conflict between the 'Islamic Extremists' and the followers of 'Sufi' Islam began in 1995. 'Islamic Extremists' accused the representatives of the official 'Sufi' clergy of the North Caucasus, who adhered to moderate religious and political views, of collaborating with the Russian Government and of an unwillingness to uphold the national and religious interests of the Muslims in the region (Akaev, 1999). In 2001, the president of Chechnya outlawed 'Wahhabism' in the Republic, and later in the same year, neighboring Kabardino-Balkaria followed suit. Earlier, in 1999, a similar law was adopted in Dagestan (Malashenko, 2013). According to Sokirianskaia, as the Army established control over the territory in 2001-2002, Overall, the large-scale military operations were replaced by the so-called 'targeted' operations or 'zachistki' [mop-up operations], where representatives of the Federal Security Service (FSB) used to arrive at particular Chechen settlements (Sokirianskaia, 2008, p. 125).

As a part of further stabilization, the policy of so-called 'Chechenization' has been pursued by the Federal authorities since 2002. As a result, significant political, administrative and military functions have been transferred to the ethnic Chechens because the program entailed the recruitment of local Chechens into the law enforcement agencies. Also, the Russian government has made efforts to use its Muslim population to increase ties with the Muslim world, including becoming an

observer at the Organization of the Islamic Conference in 2005, the most important international organization of Muslim states (Therme, 2013). More importantly, by late 2000s, the federal and regional authorities in the Caucasus began to change their uncompromising attitude toward non-traditional forms of Islam, by encouraging a dialogue with moderate non-violent 'Salafi' groups. In this way, as argued by Sagramoso and Yarlykapov (2013), the federal and regional authorities were moderate Islamic currents into the official and legal Islamic space. Persecution ceased, 'Salafi' mosques were allowed to open and a commission for the rehabilitation of fighters was set up. It was argued that the rise of moderate 'Salafism' has cut the number of young people becoming terrorists (The Economist, 2013).

5.3 THE ILLUSION OF PEACE IN THE RUSSIAN NORTH CAUCASUS AND ITS CONNECTION TO RUSSIAN FOREIGN POLICY IN RELATION TO SYRIA

Some scholars (like Falkowski, 2014) believe that current relatively peaceful situation in the North Caucasus to great extent is an illusion. This doesn't seem to be groundless to me. The program of so-called 'Chechenization', initiated in 2002, seems to bring both positive and negative changes in the region. According to Falkowski, the program has been mainly based on approval of the autonomous status of Chechnya within the Russian Federation and guarantees of high subsidies in exchange of stabilising the situation using any mean possible (Falkowski, 2014). As a consequence of such a policy, a certain disproportionate distribution of subsidies began to develop in Russia. In the same fashion, Natalia Zubarevich describes the North Caucasus and Chechnya in particular as "a bottomless pit for

federal subsidies" (Zubarevich, 2011). Maria Lipman also contends that "the per capita share of the federal budget has been significantly higher in Chechnya than the average indicator for Russia's regions, whereby the Chechen economy itself is barely viable: in 2011, 90 percent of the Chechen budget consisted of federal transfer funds" (Lipman, 2015). What is more, the federal center did not control how these funds were spent. As a result, such a 'privileged' position of the Caucasus Region in comparison to other regions drew a lot of criticism towards the Russian government.

A lot of criticism evolved also around the figure of Ramzan Kadyrov, the current Head of the Chechen Republic. According to Mark Galeotti, Kadyrov "took full advantage of the opportunities to plunder the federal subsidies which continue to pour into Chechnya, and also dispenses such opportunities to his friends" (Galeotti, 2015). Ramzan Kadyrov in many ways represents a controversial figure in Russia. On the one hand, he has gained the image of a guarantor of stability in the Caucasus region in the eyes of many Russians and the Russian Muslims (Russel, 2014). He is also considered to be a member of Vladimir Putin's 'inner circle', and as such proved himself being one of the most loyal and reliable associates. However, on the other hand, there is a lot of criticism formed around his personality and his policy. According to Mark Galeotti (2015), Kadyrov's personal authority over Chechnya is absolute. Moreover, As Galeotti continues, Kadyrov has used this to fill the republic's hierarchy with his allies, friends, and relatives (Galeotti, 2015). It is true that Ramzan Kadyrov enjoys a very privileged status in comparison to the leaders of other Russian Republics. For example, Kadyrov is the only leader in any of Russia's republics who has a private army (Walker, 2015). Some scholars

even speak about 'the cult of personality' of Mr. Kadyrov (International Crisis Group, 2015).

The North Caucasus represents the region of a special significance for Russia. Like Vladimir Putin said in 2011: "The North Caucasus is not a ballast, but one of the pearls of Russia" (in Schwirtz, 2011). However, it seems that Russia is paying rather a very high price for the stability in Chechnya. As argued by Judah, this policy has already been heavily criticized by opposition's members, who urged the federal government to expel the North Caucasus republics from the Federation (Judah, 2013). Despite the security situation in Chechnya and the North Caucasus has relatively normalized, some of the region's problems remain unresolved. Unemployment in parts of the North Caucasus is quite high (Schwirtz, 2011), poverty in the villages hasn't decreased, and hundreds of people die from frequent 'Islamists' attacks (Judah, 2013). As Maciej Falkowski (2014) suggests, the Caucasus's stability is to great extent linked to the stability of Russia itself. A serious economic or political crisis in the Russian Federation might cause 'unfreezing' of the Caucasian problems, which may explode with a new strength (Falkowski, 2014). The crisis may well re-activate the idea of the Chechen independence. Under Falkowski, "Ramzan Kadyrov is laying the foundations for this idea much more successfully than the General Dzhokhar Dudayev did in the early 1990s" (Falkowski, 2014). Also, despite the stabilisation of the situation in Chechnya and an overall decrease in the terrorist activities, 'Religious Extremists' were not fully eradicated in the region, and continue committing terrorist acts throughout Russia.

According to the Global Terrorism Index for 2014 prepared by the Institute for Economics and Peace, Russia ranked 11th out of 162 countries, behind only countries such as Afghanistan, Iraq, and Pakistan (Institute For Economics & Peace, 2014). For many years following the fall of the Soviet Union, terrorism in Russia was primarily referred to the North Caucasus, however, later on, it also spilled out to other regions in Russia. In March 2011, Doku Umarov, the former President of the Republic of Ichkeria, and later a rebel leader, in the video message, announced his intention to expand the so-called 'Caucasus Emirate' into Russia's heartland, and called for the Muslims in Tatarstan and Bashkortostan to revolt against Russia (Ferris-Rotman, 2011). The Emirate in the Caucasus was proclaimed by Umarov in 2007 when he abolished the Chechen Republic of Ichkeria and named himself the Emir of the Caucasus Emirate (Hahn, 2011). Before that, as observed by Keenan (2013), Tatarstan has long been a model region for religious and ethnic tolerance. However, in July 2012, in the Republican capital Kazan, the Muslim leader, Valiulla Yakupov, was shot dead, and the Mufti of Tatarstan, Ildus Fayzov, was seriously wounded (Ivshina, 2012). The assassination was carried out by the local 'Jihadists', who fought Faizov's campaigns to rid Tatarstan of 'Religious Extremism'. Overall, there is a common development of religious traditionalists gradually losing their popularity among the Muslim youth in Russia, because, how Margaret Conant states, 'Religious Extremists' are often capable of offering answers to the questions that concern the youth (Conant).

As noted above, in 2007, Umarov, "declared a creation of what he called 'the Caucasus Emirate' in order to establish the Islamic state under the Sharia law encompassing the entire North Caucasus region and Dagestan" (Russe, 2014, p. 154). As Falkowski (2015) argues, the emergence of such Islamic State in the

Caucasus poses an additional threat to domestic security of the Russian Federation, primarily for the ethnic Russians and the residents of the Caucasian republics due to the risk of a new wave of 'Islamist' terrorism in Russia, and the intensification of the militants' actions in the Caucasus. Hahn (2007) contends that, since its foundation, the Caucasus Emirate cells and operatives have carried out nearly 3,000 attacks in Russia. Being a "part and parcel of the global 'Jihadist' revolutionary alliance" (Hahn, 2007, p. 59), it is said that, the Caucasus Emirate have significant ties and find great inspiration in the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham, which has great plans involving Russian Caucasus (Suchkov, 2014).

In September 2014, The Islamic State militants posted a video threat addressed to Bashar al-Assad and the Russian President Vladimir Putin. In the video, the terrorists said that Assad's weapons would be turned against him as well as the Russian equipment, which was used to bomb the Islamic State fighters (Dubovikova, 2014). One Islamic State militant said he would like to convey a message to Vladimir Putin, in which he warned that the Islamic State will "liberate Chechnya and the Caucasus" and also added, "Putin's throne would be taken by the Islamic State" (in Dubovikova, 2014). Islamic State claims to territory within Russia are not new. Earlier there was even a map released by the Islamic State, in which the Southern territories of Russia were colored as parts of the 'Islamic Caliphate'. The map was issued as a directive for an estimated Islamic State's territorial expansion by 2020 (Barmin, 2014). Moreover, it has also been proved that the Russian nationals are fighting for the Islamic State and other 'Islamist' groups in Syria. According to Alexander Bortnikov, the Director of the Russian Federal Security Service, nearly 1,700 Russian nationals are believed to be fighting on the side of the Islamic State (TASS, 2015). Some Islamic State's militants are also said

to be the veterans of the Chechen wars or relatives of the exiles (Dearden, 2014). The President of the Religion and Society Information and Analysis Center, Alexey Grishin, points out, that the Middle Eastern 'Islamists' are also providing tangible support to their coreligionists in Russia (Grishin, 2012). This support might evolve into a direct sponsorship of the 'Islamists' activities on the territory of the Russian Federation, where the large Muslim groups live. That poses a direct threat to the Russian domestic security. Moreover, it is argued, that the Islamic State constantly seeks to lure more of their compatriots and has stated a goal of establishing a brigade out of the Chechens (Barmin, 2014). As Maciej Falkowski notes, "the fact that the Caucasian 'Islamists' have physically joined the 'Global Jihad' sets a precedent in the history of the modern Caucasian wars - never before have they participated in a mass scale 'Jihad' outside the Caucasus (Falkowski, 2014). It appears, however, that attracting Chechens as fighters is not the sole goal of the Islamic State. Recently it became known that the organization has set up a Caucasus-focused school for Russian-speaking children, fighters-to-be, in Syria's Rakka (Barmin, 2014).

Moreover, as observed by Barmin (2014), the Islamic State created a website, which specifically targets Russia. Overall, the Islamic State has proved to be using the latest technology to attract the supporters around the world. In this regard, Tom Whitehead argues, the Islamic State developed an application for a smartphone called "Dawn of glad tidings" through Google Play for Android phones, which allows them to lure supporters across the globe (Whitehead, 2014).

As we can see, the spread and strength of the Islamic State have proved to serve as a direct threat to the domestic stability and security of Russia. In many ways, as

found by Askari (2013), fears of the 'Islamist' expansion prompted Russian support for the regime of Bashar al-Assad in Syria. Snetkov notices that one of the arguments of Russia's support to the Assad's regime was influenced by a perception that the functioning regime in Syria is a better source of defense against a further spread of 'Religious Extremism' and foreign fighters (Snetkov, 2014, p. 184). It was argued that on a number of occasions Russian President, Vladimir Putin, as well as the Foreign Minister, Sergey Lavrov, urged all Middle Eastern states and the US to cooperate with the Syrian government's fight against the Islamic State (in Baczynska, 2015; Pickles, 2015).

Moreover, as Askari (2013) contends, Russia is opposed to the regime change in Syria because it fears that the rise of 'Religious Extremist' activities would also encourage separatist tendencies among the Muslims in Russia. These fears also do not seem groundless. According to Malashenko (2014), the victories of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the 'Islamist' Ennahda Party in Tunisia, as well as the participation of the 'Islamists' in the Libya's new government and their growing activities intensified political activities of some 'Islamist' groups in Russia. In August 2012, in Kazan, a capital of Tatarstan, protesters called for the overthrow of the Russia's government (Malashenko, 2014). In February 2013, in Dagestan's capital, Makhachkala, two 'Islamist's' organizations held a demonstration to show solidarity with Assad's opponents (Malashenko, 2014). In August 2012, 'Islamists' from the Hizb ut-Tahrir's cell in Tatarstan organised a celebration of a Muslim holiday in Kazan and demanded the Russian flags to be removed and replaced with their symbols (Malashenko, 2014). According to Mezzofiore (2014), Hizb ut-Tahrir al-Islami, or Islamic Party of Liberation, is considered a terrorist organization in many countries, including Russia, where the party was banned in 2003 under the

Supreme Court decision. It is also found by Malashenko (2014), that 'Islamists' have also become more active in the neighbouring Republic of Bashkortostan, where several 'Islamist' groups already existed.

CONCLUSION

Particular attention of this Chapter is devoted to the analysis of Islam, its history in Russia, and in particular to the study of 'Religious Extremism', which considered to be one of the main threats to the Russian national security and integrity nowadays. The first part of this chapter explains that in modern Russia, the official political discourse on Islam is twofold. It is demonstrated that there is a differentiation between so-called 'traditional' and 'non-traditional' Islam. 'Sufism' represents so-called 'traditional' form of Islam in Russia. It is contend that by itself, 'Sufism' is rather a complex form of Islam, having a number of sub-currents or schools ('Hanafism', 'Hanabalism', 'Shafiism' and 'Malikism'), and represented by a few brotherhoods ('Naqshbanaya', 'Qadiriya', and 'Shaziliya') in Russia. The chapter demonstrates that today, 'Sufi Islam' in Russia is represented by 'Hanafism', which is also taken as the position of key political bodies representing the interests of the Russian Muslims - the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and European Countries of the CIS and the Russian Council of Muftis. It is also showed that 'traditional' Islam is supported by the Russian government. Such a partnership relations between the Muslim Clergy and the Russian government has proved to form quite a new development in Russian politics. In this part, the confusion existing in the Russian political discourse on the matter of differentiation between 'Salafism', 'Wahhabism', their so-called 'extreme' forms, as well as 'Jihaddism' and 'Shahiddism' is addressed. It demonstrates that these forms of Islam in Russia are

recognized as 'non-traditional'. Moreover, it also shows that so-called 'non-traditional' Islam in Russia stands opposite to so-called 'official' or 'traditional' Islam in Russia.

Part 2 of this chapter offers an analysis of how Islam and the Muslims were historically oppressed in Russia. It also offers a reader the evidence on how 'Religious Extremism' has become one of the consequences of the Soviet demise.

Part 3 of this chapter is dedicated to proving the argument that domestic security in Russia remains rather fragile due to a high risk of 'Islamist' terrorism across the Russian Federation. It also demonstrates how the rise of 'Religious Extremism' during the Arab Spring, and in particular, activities of the Islamic State, pose threat to Russia's domestic security and territorial integrity. Such evidence also proves the argument that domestic security considerations affected Russian foreign policy decision-making in Syria.

CHAPTER VI. RUSSIA AND THE MIDDLE EAST

6.1   RUSSIA'S RELATIONS WITH THE MIDDLE EASTERN STATES

According to Rubinstein (2004), the term 'Middle East' has been in general usage since 1902, when the American naval historian Mahan described the region around the Persian Gulf as, viewed from Europe, neither Near East, nor the Far East. It is commonly agreed that the Middle East refers to Turkey, Iran, the Arab Gulf states, Israel and its neighbours (Nizameddin, 1999). The Russia's relationships with the Middle Eastern states seem to have been always complex. However, in modern time, the Middle Eastern region represents the area of particular importance for Russia. Firstly, the region is geopolitically valuable due to its close proximity to the Russian borders. Moreover, as Zvi Magen suggests, the region comes as "the place where regional and global interests converge, and as such, it is an arena for the international competition between the states – political, economic, and security-based" (Magen, 2013, p. 33). Also, stability in the Middle East has a dramatic effect on Russia, as the threats arising from this region are the matters not only of foreign policy but of the Russia domestic policy, security and territorial integrity as well. These threats mainly concern the rise of 'Religious Extremism' across the Middle East. This development, as it is mentioned in previous chapters, has become the matter of particular attention in Russia, because the rise of 'Religious Extremism' in the Middle East affects the domestic security in Russia. As a consequence, Russia builds its foreign policy in the Middle East and Syria in particular on its domestic security implications. Another important aspect, as observed by Baev (2015), is that the Middle East region provides the best opportunity for Moscow to sustain the

status of the key player in the Global political arena and in the Middle Eastern region in particular. At the same time, it is worth saying that Russia has not always had these strategic interests and ambitions in the region.

Russia's more direct involvement in the Middle East was foreshadowed by two developments: the capture of Kazan from the the Muslim Tatars in 1552, which opened up the entire lower Volga River region for settlement and penetration, and, the incorporation of Ukraine into the Russian Empire in 1654, which ushered in centuries of conflict between the Russian Empire and the retreating Ottoman Empire. Over the course of 250 years, the two fought each other 13 times (Petro and Rubinstein, 1996). Even in the 19th or 20th century, the Middle East was not among the most vital interests of the Russian leaders. According to Petro and Rubinstein (1996), Russia's primary security and diplomatic concerns were focused on its Western borders in Europe. Russian foreign relations with the Arab world had undergone dramatic changes after it was transformed into the USSR in 1922 following the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution. As argued by Kreutz (2006), the Soviet rulers were in constant search of new partners and friends in their mission to struggle against the Western Capitalist domination. In further years Moscow invested greatly in military, economic and political integration with the Middle East. If Stalin paid little attention to the region as a whole, though paying much attention to relations with Turkey and Iran. Khrushchev perceived the region as particularly important for enhancing the Soviet prestige and in parallel limiting the US influence in the region. During the Brezhnev's rule, Iraq and Iran were placed at the top of the interests in Russia (Nizameddin, 1999). A major change in the Russia-Middle East relations came with the Gorbachev's 'New Thinking', which rejected the role of ideology in the foreign policy-making. During the 1990s, Russia did not even

attempt to define its national interests in the Middle East and the Arab world. However, since the moment of Vladimir Putin coming to power, Moscow started pursuing a more active policy in the region (Malashenko, 2013). It is suggested by some scholars that Russia's re-appearance as an active player in the Middle East under President Vladimir Putin has the aim of restoring the country's position as the 'Great Power' (Trenin, 2016; Borshchevskaya and Gordon, 2016; Parker, 2015).

This part of chapter VI focuses on the Russia's relations only with the Arab states in the Middle East, therefore neglecting the Russia-Israel relations, as they do not represent particular relevance for this thesis.

Iran

Iran occupies a special position in the Middle East, and mostly because of its geostrategic location. In the West, Iran borders with Iraq. In the North-Western sector, Iran runs a common border with Turkey. Along with a large stretch of its Northern border – Azerbaijan, and in the East, Iran has a common border with Afghanistan (Gusher, 1997). Over the years, relations between Russia and Iran had their ups and downs. The Soviet-Iranian relations were rather poor between 1945 and 1961 but improved gradually after 1962. Since the dissolution of the USSR, Iran has become one of the main Russian partners in bilateral, regional, and Global matters. Both in the Soviet time and after the USSR fall, Russia and Iran has done a lot for expanding and strengthening of friendly relations and cooperation between each other. One of the important points here is that Iran has been under sanctions ever since 1979. According to Nader Habibi (2013), there were about three rounds of anti-Iran sanctions: first round was initiated in 1980 after the Iran hostage crisis; the second one - in the 1980s, and was a part of the US dual containment policy

adopted against Iran and Iraq; the third one was imposed in the 1990s, when the United States became alarmed about the Iran's nuclear programme. As observed by Habibi (2013), the EU and the United Nations joined the US in anti-Iran sanctions in the 2000s. It can be suggested that in many ways Russia-Iran cooperation is based on their common anti-Western sentiments and desire to oust the West from the Middle East. Today the two countries have a large number of very close interests both on the regional level and in the sphere of bilateral relations. For example, in 2015, Russia and Iran signed a contract to supply S-300 missile system (BBC, 2015).

Turkey

Russia and Turkey have a long history of turbulent relations, including periods of an open military confrontation, and the periods of a lucrative partnership. The essence of the initial rivalry seems to be in a competition between two empires – the Russian Empire, which saw itself as 'the Third Rome', and the Ottoman Empire. A direct rivalry with the Ottoman Empire began from the Crimean war of 1853–1856, putting an alliance of Turkey, Britain, and France against Russia (Demirtepe, 2013). That quite soon was followed by the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-1878. Another important episode of confrontation was resulted by the Russian conquest of the Caucasus in the 19th century. As a result of Russia's annexation of the North Caucasus and, as argued by Walter Richmond (2013), the subsequent genocide of the Circassian population in the region, about one million Caucasus Muslims (mainly Circassians) migrated to Turkey (Richmond, 2013). It is suggested that these communities still live in Turkey and that they influenced the Turkish negative attitude to the Chechen

wars in Russia in the 1990s (Markedonov and Ulchenko, 2011; The Conversation, 2015).

During the Soviet rule, the relations between two states remained rather tense (Gokay, 1997, 2006). Also, the Soviet's attitude to Turkey was marked by lack of trust. According to Harris (1972), one of the milestones between The Soviets and Turkey was mainly concerned over Turkey's alignment with the West, not the Soviets. As Harris also argues, for the Soviets, another "irritant in the relationship stemmed from the suppression of the Turkish Communist Party by the Kemalist regime in 1925" (Harris, 1972, p. 5). Before the World War II, the relations between two states further deteriorated after the Montreux Convention Regarding the Regime of the Straits in 1936. In particular, the Soviets were not satisfied with their demands of the Straits at the Black Sea. (MacFie, 1989; Rozakēs, 1987). As it has been argued, the tension reached the peak when Turkey joined NATO in 1952 and placed itself within the Western alliance against the Warsaw Pact during the Cold War (Gokay, 2006; Ruff, 2016).

After the fall of the Communist rule, the Russia-Turkey relations entered a phase of peaceful coexistence and strategic bilateral cooperation. According to Ruff (2016), Russia became Turkey's largest provider of energy, while many Turkish companies began to operate in Russia. Before the Syrian conflict, relations between Turkey and Russia enjoyed a very lucrative stage for both states. As Özdal, Özertem, Has and Demirtepe (2013) note, Turkey, and Russia made numerous deals in such sectors as bilateral trade, the energy sector (including gas, oil, nuclear energy), tourism and others. The Turkish leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and the Russian leader, Vladimir Putin, seemed to develop a good chemistry between each other. As Adam Balcer argues, "since becoming Prime Minister of Turkey in 2003, Erdogan

has met with President Putin or spoke with him over the telephone around 35 times, an impressive number given that Putin rarely meets with world leaders that often" (Balcer, 2015). All that dramatically changed mainly due to different views Turkey and Russia had in relation to the Syrian conflict. This is discussed in more details in the following subchapter 6.3 The Arab Spring and its effects on Russia.

Jordan

Jordan initially attracted a little attention of the Russian political administration due to a small size of the state, and its rather pro-Western foreign policy. The situation began to change after the first Arab-Israeli War, in the aftermath of which Jordan gained some territory of the Arab Palestine including the East Jerusalem (the West Bank), which made it more important in geopolitical terms (Kreutz, 2006). Kreutz (2006) contends that by 1970, the USSR became the main arms supplier to the region, and also the Jordanian King was interested in getting the Soviet military equipment. The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 drastically changed regional and the Global dynamics. The Post-Soviet Russia actively supported the Jordan-Israeli rapprochement and encouraged King Hussein to sign the peace treaty with Israel in 1994 (Maddy-Wetzmann, 1995). But two problems emerged: firstly, there was a question of Jordan's debt to Russia, and, secondly, there was the Russian military intervention to Chechnya, which was strongly condemned by the Chechen community in Jordan (Working, 2001).

The Circassian community (which also includes Chechens) settled in Jordan during the Ottoman Empire times in the middle of the 19th century and became part of the Jordanian society and establishment (Natho, 2009, p. 485). As Kreutz (2006) argues, anti-Russian and pro-separatist propaganda found a receptive audience there, and the Chechen fighters from Russia even managed to find financial support

from Jordan. Nevertheless, the Chechen disagreement did not have a deep or lasting impact on the Russian-Jordan relations. For Jordan, the matter was a peripheral issue that didn't affect friendship with Moscow. By late 1990s, Jordan officially recognised the Chechen conflict as the Russian domestic matter and put a strict ban on a pro-Chechen separatist propaganda in the country (Kreutz, 2006, p. 43).

According to Kreutz (2006), after the death of King Hussein in 1999, Abdullah II, who inherited his throne, expanded the Jordanian-Russian relations by finding a suitable partner in the new Russian leader, Vladimir Putin. In the political and strategic arena, both countries have common concerns over developments in the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories and the Israeli policies in the Palestinian Territories, as well as a spread of 'Religious Extremism' in the region. Another common focus was the Iraqi situation and the American role in the region. In 2015, Russian and Jordanian officials even agreed to establish a so-called "special working mechanism" to share information on counter-terrorist operations in Syria (Lendman, 2015).

Lebanon

According to Kreutz (2006), the Lebanon's strategically important coastal location and its relatively numerous Christian population had, for a long time, attracted the attention of the European powers, including the Russian Empire. When the Bolsheviks came to power in 1917, they started looking for allies in pursuing the Communist ideas in the Arab world. Lebanon became a gateway for "the Communist infiltration into the region" (Kreutz, 2006, p. 33). The first Arab Communist organization was established in October 1924 under the name of "The

Lebanese People's Party", and in further years it facilitated the Soviet's political and cultural influence in Lebanon (Kreutz, 2006). During the civil war in Lebanon in 1975, the USSR supported the Lebanese National Movement and the Palestinian coalition, which included the Lebanese Communist Party (Kreutz, 2006). Soviet influence in Lebanon was reduced to a minimum as a result of two events. Firstly, The Soviets were not able to prevent the Lebanese Civil War in 1975-1976 (Rabinovich, 1979, p. 58). Secondly, as explained by Golan, Beirut was disappointed with Moscow's quite passive attitude towards the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 (Golan, 1982-83, p. 7). As a result, the Russia's role in Lebanon was reduced to a minimum in further years.

The situation changed after the Soviet Union demise. As Kreutz (2006) observes, Lebanon was one of the first states who recognized the Russian Federation as an independent state in December 1991. Although the fall of the USSR greatly weakened the Russia's influence in the Middle East. During the last decades, the Russian-Lebanese relations have slowly re-emerged. In spring 1995, Kozyrev visited Lebanon to restart bilateral relations. As a result, a treaty on trade and economic cooperation was signed (Kreutz, 2006). During the Israeli military intervention in the Southern Lebanon, Moscow on the one hand strongly condemned the anti-Israeli terrorist assault, however, on the other hand, expressed concern that the Lebanese sovereignty was violated (Kreutz, 2006). Overall, Moscow's support for Lebanon has not changed, and in the following years, both political and economic relations between Russia and Lebanon seemed to be advanced. There is economic cooperation between Russia and Lebanon, with trade between the two countries increased significantly, particularly after the 2006 Second Lebanon War (Kreutz, 2006). After the war, Russia sent humanitarian aid and

military engineering units to help in rebuilding infrastructures and construct bridges. Russia also supplies Lebanon with weapons (Kreutz, 2006).

While maintaining relations with the Lebanese government, Russia has also established a separate relationship with Hizbollah. Unlike many Western states, Russia does not consider Hezbollah to be a terrorist organization. As the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov says: "They [Hezbollah] have never committed any terrorist acts on the Russian territory. Hezbollah was elected by people to the Lebanese parliament. There are the cabinet members and ministers who are from Hezbollah in Lebanon. It's a legitimate socio-political force" (in Taher, 2015). Important to notice, the Hezbollah forces appeared to be fighting in Syria in support of the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, who is also a Moscow's ally (in Taher, 2015).

Egypt

The Russian-Egyptian relations have a long history. Egypt was the first and most important polity in the Middle East with which the Soviets established relations. According to Potserebov (1997), during the Nasser years, many young Egyptians studied in the Soviet universities and military schools, including the future Egypt's president Hosni Mubarak. El-Hussini (2016) contends that during the Presidency of Gamal Abdel Nasser (1956-1970), the Russia-Egypt relations entered into a cooperative phase, and included a military assistance, economic and political support. The relationships went sour when the new President Anwar Sadat started reorienting the country toward the West (Shlykov, 2015). In 1981, these relations were severed as a result of the Soviet's opposition to the Israeli-Egyptian peace treaty. Relations were reestablished under the President Hosni Mubarak, and

further intergovernmental improvement in relations followed after the fall of the USSR. In April 2005, the Russian President Vladimir Putin visited Egypt, and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak visited Russia back in April 2008. Nizameddin (1999) says that both countries agreed to work together to help Egypt to create a nuclear programme for the civilian purposes.

Iraq

Moscow's relations with Iraq also have a long and complex history. It is the author's belief that these relations have been important mainly for historical and geostrategic reasons. The Iraqi Communist Party founded in 1934, was one of the most effective and socially influential Marxist organisations in the region and represented a significant political force in the country (Kreutz, 2006). Being soured in January 1955, when the Iraqi government decided to join the Baghdad Pact (or The Central Treaty Organization (CENTO), or the Middle East Treaty Organization (METO), which was mainly intended to prevent the Soviet expansion in the Middle East, Russia-Iraq relations were re-established in 1958 by a new Iraqi leader, the General Abd-al-Karim Qasim, after a military coup (Kreutz, 2006). Iraq remained a close ally of the USSR until the end of the Soviet era (Kreutz, 2006). Magen (2011) suggests that Russia considered Iraq being geopolitically important as the link between the Middle East and the Persian Gulf, Turkey, Iran, the Caucasus, and the Central Asia. Post-Soviet Russia remained interested in cooperation with Iraq and showed its political support to Baghdad against the United States since 1994. According to Campbel (1999) and Kreutz (2006), Primakov service as a Foreign Minister (1996-1998) was marked with his personal links with Iraq. As Kreutz (2006) contends, these personal sentiments Primakov developed between 1968 and 1970 when he worked as a Soviet press correspondent in Baghdad and had friendly relations with

Saddam. Therefore, Iraq became one of his main priorities in the Middle Eastern region. It seems that Putin's and Lavrov's policy toward Iraq in many ways followed Primakov's lead. The relations between Iraq and Russia were improved and Iraq was perceived as the Russia's reliable partner in the Middle East. Although, as stated by Kreutz (2006), Russia's political and economic influence in Iraq decreased dramatically after the American invasion in 2001. At the same time, the Russian government managed to establish good relations with the new Iraqi regime. Now the two states remain partners in military and economic sectors. In particular, in 2012, Russia and Iraq signed an over $1 billion arms deal package including an air-defense system, tanks, infantry weapons, warplanes and helicopter gunships (Al-Amir, 2012). In terms of an economic partnership, Russia trade with Iraq was said to reach a record total of nearly $2 billion in 2015 (Sputnik News, 2016).

Afghanistan

According to Saikal, Farhadi, and Nourzhanov (2012), the roots of the Soviet's interest in Afghanistan can be traced in the 19th century and the 'Great Game' politics between Russia and Britain, under which Afghanistan served as a strategic 'buffer state' between Russia and Britain. In 1919, Afghanistan proclaimed its full independence, and the Soviet Union was the first country to establish diplomatic relations with Afghanistan in 1919. As Nicolai Petro (1997) notes, the Soviet-Afghanistan relations improved in 1954 as part of the Khrushchev's policy of improving relations with Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan and undermining the US policy of containment. The Soviets began a major economic assistance program in Afghanistan, and between 1954 and 1978, Afghanistan received more than $1 billion of the Soviet aid, including substantial military assistance, as well as

agreements on gas and oil development, trade, transport, irrigation and factory construction, were concluded (Saikal, Farhadi and Nourzhanov, 2012).

In December 1979, the Soviet Army invaded Afghanistan in order to protect the Communist government of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan against a growing insurgency (Feifer, 2009). At the end, the whole campaign turned out to be very costly for Russia.

As argued by Feifer (2009), the Afghan resistance (the Mujahideen) was heavily supported by a variety of international actors, including the US, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Iran, China, and Egypt. In the end, the Mujahideen prevailed and the Soviet Army was forced to withdraw from Afghanistan in February 1989, having lost tens of thousands killed and wounded (Petro, 1997).

As observed by Menkiszak (2011), after the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001 by the US and the UK forces, the Russia's policy towards Afghanistan went through various stages. Afghanistan still remains important for Russia by a number of reasons. Firstly, as it was perceived by the Russian government, Afghanistan occupies an important geopolitical, geostrategic, and geoeconomic location, as it is a country which connects important regions: the post-Soviet Central Asia and the Middle East with South and East Asia" (Menkiszak, 2011). Also, Afghanistan has always been one of the central matters of Russian and Soviet foreign policy and remains to be one of the important interests for modern Russia in the Middle East. Since 2007, Russia increased its public support for the President Hamid Karzai by calling an increase in real independence for the Afghan government from the West. Russia also began to openly communicate with representatives of the moderate Taliban (Menkiszak, 2011).

Libya

Reliable relations between Libya and the Soviet Russia started to develop when Muammar Qadhafi came to power in 1969 (Fasanotti, 2016). Qadhafi visited Moscow in 1976, 1981 and 1985. During these years two states developed lucrative trade partnership, including arms supplies. But perhaps the greater breakthrough in relations between Russia and Libya happened in 2008 when Vladimir Putin visited Libya (Kremlin.ru, 2008). The meeting was very productive and ended up on reaching agreements on a few important matters. Firstly, the resolution of Libya's debt to Moscow from the Soviet times (Katz, 2008). Secondly, a memorandum of cooperation between the Gazprom and the Libyan National Oil Company (Gulf News, 2008). Moreover, how Mark Katz notes, "Gazprom appeared to become heavily involved in Libyan gas exports to Europe through a swap of some Gazprom assets in Russia in exchange for some of the assets in Libya of the ENI, Italy's multinational oil and gas company" (Katz, 2008). Also, the Russian Railroads company was provided with a contract to build a railway line between two Libyan cities (Katz, 2008). Overall, the 2008 rapprochement between Russia and Libya provided great opportunities for bilateral partnership in further years.

Arabian Peninsula

As observed by Andrej Kreutz, the Arabian Peninsula lies between the Persian Gulf and the Red Sea and between Eurasia and Africa" (Kreutz, 2004). The territory unites the countries: Yemen, Oman, Qatar, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. The Russian Empire had only a limited interest in the Arabian Peninsula, however, as argued by Kreutz (2004), some minor interest in the Arabian Peninsula appeared in the latter half of the 19th century. In modern times, it seems

that the region enjoys the Global political importance mainly because of its geopolitical location, energy resources (oil), its role in the world oil and natural gas markets, and as a place of Islam's two holiest sanctuaries, Mecca and Medina. This part mainly focuses on the Russia-Saudi Arabia relations, because relations with other states of the region do not represent particular interest for the arguments of this thesis.

Saudi Arabia

It seems that unlike Egypt and Syria, Saudi Arabia has always had quite conflicting relations with Russia. As argued by Petro (1997), the Soviet Union's interest in the Arabian Peninsula started in the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Moscow established relations with Yemen and Saudi Arabia. According to Kreutz (2004), the reason for such a reluctance to cooperate was mainly sourced in essentially too many ideological differences between the Soviets and the Saudis, in particular, the Saudi rulers seem to be concerned about Moscow's intention to create the Soviet satellites across the Middle East. Therefore, Saudi Arabia became actively involved in the anti-Communist and anti-Soviet operations in various parts of the world, especially after the Soviet's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 (Zuhur, 2011). With Gorbachev starting the '*Perestroika*', the USSR withdrew from Afghanistan and stopped supporting its forces in the Saudi neighbourhood - this new Soviet policy enabled the Saudi to accept the restoration of diplomatic relations with Moscow in September 1990 (Donaldson, Nogee, and Nadkarni, 2014). Nevertheless, it seems that everything changed since the demise of the Soviet Union. New Russia and Saudi Arabia found themselves to be the world's two largest oil producers and exporters with subsequent dependency on exports of their oil products. Despite the

changes brought by the fall of the Communism, Russia and Saudi Arabia failed to find common grounds for cooperation. According to Andrej Kreutz (2004), there are major differences between the two countries and their policies toward the oil market: 1) Saudi Arabia is a leading member of the OPEC with an overwhelming influence on other members, while Russia has never been the OPEC member and its relations with the cartel has always been tense;

2) The Saudi goal to keep oil prices stable. Moreover, in order to protect the global market and its own interests, Saudi leaders traditionally tried to prevent excessively high oil prices or their collapse from overproduction, while for Moscow, high oil prices promise strength in its economic performance (Kreutz, 2004).

Another important issue that seriously affects Russia-Sadi relations, as observed by Hunter, Thomas and Melikishvili (2004), is that in the Russian political discourse, Saudi Arabia is often used in connection to 'Wahhabism'. Hunter notices that the Russian politicians on a number of occasions accused the Saudis of providing support to the Chechen separatists and other 'Islamist' groups in the North Caucasus (in Hunter, Thomas, and Melikishvili, 2004). In response, how Kreutz (2004) argues, Saudi Arabia was the most vocal Muslim country in condemning the Moscow's policy in Chechnya. However, it should be said that in the Russian political discourse, the Saudis were quite often condemned for their involvement in the Chechen war (Bagrov, 2003). In particular, Vladimir Putin quite often blamed Saudi-born Al-Qaeda for its support to the Chechen rebels (Williams, 2015). At the same time, it needs to be said that such a discourse was not entirely groundless. It is known that the Chechen commander, Hattab, was Saudi, and another top leader, Shamil Basaev, is also known for receiving financial support and 'Jihadist' recruits from the Persian Gulf (Hegghammer, 2015, p. 221). Relationships between two

states deteriorated further in the late 1990s. That mainly became a consequence of the Saudi's official support for the Chechen rebels during the Second Chechen War. As Mark Katz observes, Saudi Arabia accused Russia of "inhuman acts against the Muslim people of Chechnya", as well as provided protection to the remains of Chechen fighters (Katz, 2008).

The events of the 9/11 brought significant changes into the Russia-Saudi relations. However, as argued by Katz (2008), the relations between Russia and Saudi Arabia first deteriorated in the immediate aftermath of the 9/11. Moreover, Vladimir Putin blamed Saudis in reluctance to chase 'Islamists', while other Russian officials "issued frequent reminders that fifteen of the nineteen 9/11 hijackers came from Saudi Arabia" (Katz, 2008, p. 5). The rapprochement between Russia and Saudi Arabia came soon after the 9/11, in many ways due to cooling in the US-Saudi relations, and deterioration of the Russia-US relations (Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty, 2006; Katz, 2008). The rapprochement resulted in the signing of a number of bilateral agreements in gas and oil sectors, as well as in the field of trade and investment (Katz, 2008). Also, one of the main signals of compromise in the Russia-Saudi relations came up when the Saudis recognised the conflict in Chechnya as the Russia's internal affair (Katz, 2008, p. 6]. In February 2007, Vladimir Putin visited Saudi Arabia – it was the first visit for the Russian leader to the country. The visit facilitated further cooperation between states in security issues, energy, trade, transportation, and scientific cooperation.

6.2   THE CASE OF SYRIA

Russia's presence and influence in Syria take roots in the 10th and 11th centuries. By 1830, Russian consular posts operated in a few Syrian cities (Kreutz, 2004). The

Imperial Russian Orthodox Society made lots of contacts with the Syrian Christian Orthodox communities, and by 1905, it opened more than 74 schools (Kreutz, 2004). It is argued (Nizameddin, 1999), that the Bolshevik rulers were enthusiastic about establishing the Communist movement in the Arab East, and therefore, in 1925, the Communist Party was created in Syria. Moscow established diplomatic links with Syria in 1944 before the country was formally recognized as an independent state on 17 April 1946. During the first decade after the World War II, however, the Moscow's relations with Damascus were cold and the Soviet leaders often condemned the Syrian rulers for oppressing their people and acting as so-called "tools of the Western imperialism" (Kreutz, 2004). However, Stalin's death in March 1953 and a subsequent Nikita Khrushchev's rise to power opened a new chapter in the Soviet-Third World relations, including the Arab World and Syria. In January 1956, the XX Congress of the Soviet Communist Party recognized the progressive role of the Third World, and since then the Arab World had become the focus of the Soviet attention (Kreutz, 2004). The Soviet-Syrian cooperation particularly flourished from 1956 to 1957. In addition to extensive military supplies, the Soviet bloc offered Syria its help in a large-scale construction of hydroelectric plants and irrigation projects (Kreutz, 2004).

The 1971 coup brought the Ba'ath Party to power and Hafez al-Assad as the President of Syria. He pursued a strategic policy of close cooperation with the Soviet Union (Abrahms, 2003, p. 45). Although the Soviet and the Syrian Communists did not favor Ba'athists, Moscow was ready to maintain and develop friendly relations with Damascus in many ways due to Syria's geostrategic importance for Russia (Hopwood, 2013, p. 74). The Soviet assistance greatly increased when more radical wings of the Ba'ath Party, which declared Socialism

as their goal, got power in two subsequent coups in January 1965 and February 1966 (Kreutz, 2004). Overwhelming defeat during the Six Day War in June 1967 increased the country's dependence on Moscow's help and protection. Overall, during 1970-1980s Syria was the USSR's main ally in the Middle East. In many ways, it served as a base for experts and advisors from the USSR, as well as for the Soviet naval units. The Syria-Russia relations improved further during the break in the Soviet-Egyptian relations in the 1970s. As Nizameddin (1999) notes, since then Syria became Moscow's most important ally in the region.

Gorbachev's rise to power in 1985 marked a significant decline in the Russia-Syria relations. Gorbachev openly denounced Assad for his reckless policy in in Lebanon and called for a significant reduction in economic and military aid. Moreover, Gorbachev was particularly concerned about Syria's policy towards Israel, and during his first meeting with the Syrian President, Gorbachev told Assad that the Soviet Union would not support Syria's efforts to achieve military parity with Israel. In accordance to Sharnoff (2009), as a consequence of this cooling in relations, Soviet arms shipments to Syria dropped dramatically.

The Soviet Union fall brought major changes in the Russia-Syria relations. In December 1991, Syria officially recognised the Russian Federation as the USSR's successor, however, Syrian relations with Russia were far from being harmonious (Kreutz, 2004). At first, there was hardly any ideological or political compromise and solidarity between post-Soviet Russia and Syria. Although significant reorientation of the Russian foreign policy towards the Middle East started when Yevgeny Primakov replaced Andrei Kozyrev as the Russian Foreign Minister in January 1996. Primakov specialised in the Middle East region and had particular sympathy

to Syria. He was the first foreign correspondent in Damascus after the Ba'athist coup in Syria and developed close personal ties with Hafez al-Assad. According to Andrej Kreutz, "Primakov believed that Syria was an indispensable partner in any true peace settlement in the Arab-Israeli conflict and that Syrian interests should be taken seriously into account" (Kreutz, 2004, p. 21).

When Vladimir Putin came to power, his administration announced their intent to start so-called "constructive interaction" with the new Syrian leader – Bashar al-Assad (Korany, 2008, p. 433). As Andrej Kreutz (2004) notes, unlike Primakov, Putin does not have any sentiments about the Middle East; his goals are rather pragmatic in a way that he sees the preservation and expansion of the Russian-Syrian relations as a leverage for Russia in sustaining its influence in the Middle East.

When the Arab Spring reached Syria in 2011, Russia was perhaps the only European state, which promised its unequivocal support to President Assad. Russia repeatedly vetoed the UN Security Council resolutions, which were aimed at ousting the Syrian President. The US and its European allies are mainly upset about the Russia's support to the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, military aid to the Syria's Armed Forces, and, more recently, about Russia's direct military involvement. Overall the Russian-Syrian relations seem to be influenced by several factors, such as:

Geopolitical interests

First of all, as Dmitri Trenin calls it, "Syria is central to Russia's geopolitical aspirations" (Trenin, 2014). In many ways, Russia's engagement in the Middle East

reflects its intention to secure the status of 'the Great Power' in politics in general and in the Middle Eastern region in particular. Key political figures in Russia never miss a chance to emphasize Russia's 'special position' in the world in their speeches or official statements. In reality, however, Russia can hardly equate itself with its Western counterparts due to decline in the economy, which aggravated in recent years, poor demography and the overall domestic security situation.

Another aspect of Russia's geopolitical interest in Syria is tied with Russia's intention to ensure the reputation of a reliable protector of its allies, and especially the Muslim allies. This thought is also supported by Simon Saradzhyan, who suggests that by cooperating with the Muslims Russia wants to demonstrate to the world's Muslim community, and the Muslim communities in Russia, that it is ready and willing to develop the ties with them and protect their interests (Saradzhyan, 2015).

Also, Russia intends to strengthen its military presence in the region. Russia's port of Tartus in Syria, even though it is small, serves the Russia's strategic interests in the Middle Eastern region (Cordesman, Nerguizian, and Popescu, 2008). The naval facility of Tartus has a long history, which is rooted in the 1970s. According to Al-Marhoun (2014), since 1967, Russian watercrafts have been continually situated along the Mediterranean Sea. The Russians also settled in the port of Tartus, a city on the Syrian coast, what they call "a point of maintenance and supply". The facility was established during the Cold War, as a part of the Russia's approach to the Mediterranean region. Precisely, as David Wragg notes, the base was built in 1971 as a part of an agreement between the Soviets and Syria, under which Syria provided Russia with the facility in return of 75 percent cancellation of the Syria's

debt to Russia from the Soviet era for a military equipment (Wragg, 2012). Since then, the Russians have been using Tartus on flexible terms and paid Damascus a limited rent for its use (Al-Marhoun, 2014). During the 1970s, how Gvosdev and Marsh observe, similar support points were located in Egypt, Ethiopia and Vietnam (Gvosdev and Marsh, 2013). Tartus quickly became the Syria's largest port, and, according to data provided by Maoz and Yaniv "by 1981, it received 2,272 ships with 3,157,000 tons of merchandise and saw 2,100 ships sail with 5,799,00 tons of exports" (Maoz and Yaniv, 2013). Since the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991, the Tartus became the only Russia's base in the Mediterranean. Gorodetsk says, "the only other foreign base is in the Cam Rahn Bay in Vietnam" (Gorodetsk, 2008). Although small, the Tartus point has great strategic interest for Russia. First of all, as argued by Matthew Bodner, it serves as the main entry point for the Russian equipment to support the Syrian government (Bodner, 2015). Most importantly, the facility sustains the Moscow's presence in the Eastern Mediterranean (Bodner, 2015). Before the Arab Spring reached Syria, the number of Russian personnel and military objects were rather low in Tartus, however, now Russia aims to strengthen its presence at Tartus even further. As noticed by Paul Schwartz, a Washington-based authority on the Russian military at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, "Russia's desire to keep this base, which, on the one hand, does have huge military benefits, is mainly political in nature" (in Harress, 2015). It is true that the facility secures Moscow's presence in the region, which is why recently the number of the Russian personnel and military vessels in Tartus increased dramatically, and the facility has all chances to be converted into a full-scale naval base (Harress, 2015). Moreover, it was also argued (Bodner, 2016) that Russia is

increasing its military presence at the second port in Syria, in the city of Latakia, which is situated at the North direction from the Tartus.

Economic interests

According to Nizameddin (1999), Russia and Syria proved to have long-standing economic ties. Even though, as it is stated by Azuolas Bogdonas, these interests were mainly centered on arms sales, it also included other trade relations, in particular, investments by Russian companies, and cooperation in the energy sector (Bogdonas, 2012). Continuing with Bogdonas's (2012) opinion, the trade cooperation was generally focused on a fulfillment of government contracts, on the basis of which Russia supplies oil products and machinery. Several Russian companies have done work on large projects in Syria. For example, the former Gazprom's subsidiary Stroytransgaz built the 319 km-long El Rehab–Homs section of the Arab Gas Pipeline in 2008 and a gas processing plant in 2009, while the Tatneft, the Russian sixth-biggest crude oil producer, has a joint venture with the Syrian General Petroleum Company for the exploration and development of oil fields since 2005 (Bogdonas, 2012; Cohen, 2014). Overall, in 2007-2011, 78 percent of all the arms transfers to Syria came from Russia (Bogdonas, 2012).

Security interests

One of the most vital interests Russia has in Syria comes from the Russia's domestic security concerns. The Syrian conflict marked an increase in terrorist activities across Russia. According to Johnston (2015), in Makhachkala, the capital of Dagestan, the rise in terrorist activities was traced between 2012-2014. In Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, in 2012, Mufti Ildus Faizov was seriously

injured, and his deputy Valiulla Yakupov was killed. Also, according to Russia Today (2015), in December 2013, two suicide bombings in transport service took place in the city of Volgograd, Russia.

Another danger for Russia comes from the general rise of 'Religious Extremism' in Syria and across the Middle East. The danger comes from these groups for Russia in particular because they have members coming from Russia and the CIS states. The list of these groups was greatly organized by Maceij Falkowski and Jozef Lang (2014) in their work 'Homo Jihadicus: Islam In The Former USSR, And The Phenomenon Of The Post-Soviet Militants In Syria And Iraq'. This list should serve as a support to the argument about the danger coming from these groups for Russia, as it shows that there are groups, which include fighters with Russian origin or citizens from the CIS. It also shows how wide-spread activities of the 'Islamist' groups have become in Syria in recent years. According to Falkowski and Lang (2015), the list of main Islamists groups operating in Syria includes:

- *Islamic state*

The group first appeared on the International scene in 2014, when it seized large territories in Syria and Iraq and proclaimed itself as a "caliphate" (Lister, 2015). From the beginning, there seemed to be some controversy over the naming of the group, because it has renamed itself on a number of times. It was known as the Islamic State, but it was also frequently referred to as the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), or the Islamic State of Iraq and al-Sham (ISIS). According to Stern and Berger (2015), in June 2014, the Islamic State dropped the –IS or -IL from its names at the end, and now it is called 'the Islamic State' with abbreviation IS. As argued by BBC (2015), it demanded that Muslims across the world swear allegiance

to its leader - Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri al-Samarrai, better known as Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi - and migrate to the territory of its control. The Islamic State has also told other 'Islamist' groups worldwide that they must accept its supreme authority (BBC, 2015). There are a lot of militants from Russia fighting on the side of the Islamic State in Syria. According to Alexander Bortnikov, director of the Russian Federal Security Service, many Russian nationals are believed to be fighting on the side of ISIS (TASS, 2015). As Barmin notes, the number is growing on a daily basis. Moreover, the Islamic State instantly threatens Russia and promises to include the Russian Caucasus into the Islamic State 'caliphate' by the year 2020 (Barmin, 2014).

It was also argued by a number of scholars, that the Islamic States operates as a multinational company, rather than a state, and using the very latest technology to attract would-be jihadists (Whitehead, 2014; Hayes, 2016; Covarrubias and Lansford, 2016).

- *Al-Nusra*

Al-Nusra or The Front for the Defense of the Syrian People – was formed in late 2011-beginning of 2012 (Lister, 2016). The organization announced its establishment with a video statement, in which the group confirmed its connection to suicide bombings in Syria in 2011 (BBC, 2013). According to Mendelsohn (2016), Al-Nusra confirmed its part in numerous guerrilla attacks against the strategic state targets. Also, despite ideological and tactical differences, the group closely cooperates with the Islamic State.

- *Hisb ut-Tahrir.*

The organization was founded in 1953 as a Sunni Muslim organization in Jerusalem by Taqiuddin al-Nabhani, an Islamic scholar, and since then Hizb ut-Tahrir has

spread to more than 50 countries including Russia (Choufi, 2012). The members of Hizb ut-Tahrir are being arrested by the Russian Security Services on a regular basis across the Russian country. As claimed by Russia Today (2015), the organization instantly recruits new militants in Russia and the Central Asia. Moreover, as found by Malashenko (2013), 'Islamists' from Hizb ut-Tahrir organized opposition protests in Kazan, Tatarstan in 2012. In Syria, Hizb ut-Tahrir is fighting on the side of the opposition forces to the Syrian government and acts in cooperation with other 'Islamist' groups.

- *Jaish al-Muhajireen wal-Ansar* (army of migrants and helpers). This group includes up to a thousand militants from the Caucasus, the Central Asia, and the Western Europe and the Balkans. In 2015, the group pledged its allegiance to Jabhat al-Nusra (Paraszczuk, 2015).

- *Jund al-Sham* (soldiers of the Levant) – A 'Salafi Jihadist' group formed in Syria in December 2012. The group is known to be siding with the Nusra Front (Terrorism Research and Analysis Consortium).

- *Tarkhan's group* – a small group of several dozen of militants aligned with the two organizations named above and led by Tarkhan Gaziyev – until recently one of the most prominent figures of the Chechen militancy. In 2016, the group was renamed to Katiba Ibad ar (Paraszczuk, 2016).

- *Khalifat Jamaat* (Caliphate community) – a Chechen 'Jihadist' group, which has an estimated 80 to 90 Chechen fighters operating in the Northwestern province. The group split from the Islamic Front's Ansar Sham earlier this year. Its leader, Abdul Hakim Shishani, is a veteran of the war in Chechnya (Roggio, 2014).

- *Ansar al-Sham* (Helpers of the Levant) – a Syrian militant group formed in 2012 in Latakia by a local entrepreneur and a veteran of the war in Afghanistan – Abu Omar

al-Jamila. The supreme commander of the group's militant wing is a Chechen – Abu Musa Shishani (Falkowski and Lang, 2015).

- *Jamaat Sabri* – a small group (between 100 and 200 hundred people) established in 2012 by an Uzbek – Abdullah al-Tashkenti (Daly, 2014).

- *Jamaat Imam Bukhari* (Imam Bukhari's community) – an Uzbek group with up to several hundred members. (Falkowski and Lang, 2015).

6.3   THE ARAB SPRING AND ITS EFFECTS ON RUSSIA AND ITS RELATIONS WITH THE MIDDLE EASTERN STATES

According to the report prepared by the Russian International Affairs Council in 2013, during the last two years, we have been witnessing a fundamental reversal of politics in the Arab world (Naumkin, Aksenenok, Zvyagelskaya, Karasova, Kuznetsov, Popov, Sapronova, Stegny, Filonik and Shlykov, 2013). The report also says that such changes in the Arab world have already led to the regime change in Tunisia, Egypt, Libya, and Yemen, the deployment of Saudi troops to Bahrain, the civil war in Syria and reforms in Morocco and Jordan (Naumkin, Aksenenok, Zvyagelskaya, Karasova, Kuznetsov, Popov, Sapronova, Stegny, Filonik and Shlykov, 2013). The process was formally marked as 'The Arab Spring'. It took its start in Tunisia in late 2010 with mass anti-government protests. The uprising was marked 'The Jasmin revolution' in media by a number of authors (Ryan, 2011; Eltahawy, 2011; CNN, 2011). Unable to control the crowds, the President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali was forced to flee the country in January 2011, after 23 years in power. Over the next months, Ben Ali's downfall inspired similar uprisings across the Middle East.

Originally the Arab Spring started with riots by young people, seeking freedom, justice, and political activism (Haddad, Bsheer, Abu-Rish, 2012). Although peaceful demonstrations quickly evolved into a civil war, in which other forces, including 'Islamist' parties and militant groups, were involved. At the moment, the Arab Spring represents a complex conflict of a global dimension, which has drawn in not only Arab and non-Arab regional players but also global ones. As noticed by Alexey Malashenko (2013), the world's leading powers are directly or indirectly drawn into the developments unfolding in the region. Russia seems to play one of the key roles in mediating the crisis in Syria, which has become a culmination of the Arab Spring. Although the Russian foreign policy has drawn criticism by many scholars (Stuster, 2015). The Arab Spring also negatively affected Russia's relations with Middle Eastern states. In this Part, there is a description of selected cases of how the relations between Russia and the Middle East states have changed.

Libya

When the protests reached Libya in 2011, Moscow found itself caught between the desires to keep Qaddafi, a Russian ally, in power and the Western pressure to allow international support to the rebels. The Kremlin tried to prevent the Western intervention in the Libyan conflict, blocking a number of the United Nations Security Council resolutions, however, eventually, Moscow gave in due to growing international pressure to support the forces opposing Qaddafi. On 26 February 2011, Russia joined the embargo on arms exports to Libya (Aljazeera, 2011), and it abstained in the UN Security Council vote in March 2011, which imposed a no-fly zone over Libya, giving other countries the right to take necessary measures to protect the civilian population (United Nations, 2011). This allowed the North

Atlantic Treaty Organization to carry out a military operation at the end of March 2011. As a result of this operation, Qaddafi was ousted, and a new pro-Western government was installed (Malashenko, 2013). Dmitry Medvedev, then the Russian President, confirmed that Russia's support for the UN Security Council resolution was given "in response to the Libyan authorities' actions", and suggested that the Colonel Gaddafi lost the legitimacy and requested that he should step down (Medvedev, 2011). Vladimir Putin, who was the Russian Prime Minister in 2011, however, sharply criticized the Western coalition attacking Libya, and stated that the coalition had gone beyond the bounds of the U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing an intervention to protect civilians and suggested Gaddafi's actions did not justify foreign interference, let alone attempts to remove him (Reuters, 2011). With Qaddafi gone and the new Libyan government displeased with the Kremlin, Moscow appeared with only one remaining friend in the Middle East — the Syrian President Bashar Assad. As it was mentioned in Part 6.2 of this Chapter, the Kremlin's policy of supporting Assad has earned it lots of criticism from its Western colleagues and further weakened its influence in the Arab world.

Nevertheless, Russia managed to develop relatively good relations with the new government of Libya. According to Mark Katz, in December 2012, the Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov announced that Moscow was in talks with Tripoli regarding the military training between the Russian and Libyan military personnel (Katz, 2013, p. 38). In January 2013, the Russian oil firm Tatneft held discussions with the Libyan National Oil Corporation about e resuming operations in Libya (Fortin, 2013). In February 2013, the Russian Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation announced that it held talks about resuming the Russian arms sales to Libya (Katz, 2013). Also, as observed by Mark Katz, in February, the

Russian Foreign Minister met with Mahmoud Jibril, the leader of the Libyan National Forces Alliance, in Moscow where they discussed ways to strengthen the traditionally friendly Russian–Libyan relationships in various fields (Katz, 2013, p. 2). However, in 2013, the Russian embassy in Libya was attacked. All Russian diplomats and their families were evacuated. The Russian representatives announced as a condition for the return of the Russian diplomatic personnel to Libya only when the new Libyan government promises the security for the personnel (The Voice of Russia, 2013).

Saudi Arabia

The Syrian conflict had an especially negative impact on Moscow's relations with Saudi Arabia. Shortly after the start of the Arab uprisings, tensions emerged between Moscow and Riyadh, with Saudi Arabia supporting the opposition to the Moscow-backed regimes in Libya and especially in Syria (Donaldson and Nogee, 2014). It is argued that after the incident with downing the Russian jet in November 2015, Turkey tried to ally with Saudi Arabia and deepen their strategic ties on the ground of the common Sunni identity (Grim, Schulberg, Jones, 2015). As some analysts also suggest, that may have a purpose to counter the Russian and Iranian interests in the Middle East (Bogdanov, 2015). Therefore, as believed by Katz, the Saudi-Russian relations will likely to remain acrimonious as long as the Syrian conflict persists (Katz, 2013). However more recently, the Saudi Minister of Foreign Affairs, Adel bin Ahmed Al-Jubeir, expressed the Saudi's intention to improve their ties with Russia, which he called the 'Great power' (Ellyatt, 2016). As found by Sergie, Smith, and Blas (2016), in February 2016, Russia and Saudi Arabia agreed to freeze oil output in order to tackle the supply crisis and reduce the collapse in oil

prices. As a few sources note (Sheppard, Raval, and Farchy, 2016; Mufson, 2016), it was the first coordinated move by the world's two largest producers to counter the crisis of the oil production.

Turkey

Moscow and Ankara have serious differences with regards to Syria. Ankara seems being displeased that Moscow continues aiding the Assad regime. For its part, Moscow was not happy that Turkey has supported the Syrian opposition (Katz, 2013). The tension culminated on 24 November 2015, when the Russian warplane SU-24 was shot down near the Turkey-Syria border. Turkey justified the act by saying that the Russian plane violated the Turkish airspace (Aljazeera, 2015). However, the Russian Defense Ministry acknowledged that the SU-24 fighter jet stayed within the Syrian airspace, and provided a video of the plane's flight in confirmation (Sputnik News, 2015). The Russian President Vladimir Putin described the incident as "a stab in the back" (BBC, 2015). Meanwhile, the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan declared "the Russian plane was shot down because it did not answer warning coming from the Turkish side" (in Melvin and Martinez, 2015). President Putin also added "Turkey's current government has been following a domestic policy of quite conscious 'Islamisation' throughout the country for a number of years now" (Putin, 2015).

At the moment of writing this chapter, significant changes occurred in Turkey. On 15 July 2016, a coup d'etat was attempted in Turkey against the administration of the President Receip Tayyip Erdogan. Short before the coup, the President Erdogan and the Russian President Putin initiated an open dialogue on the construction of the 'Turkish Stream' natural gas pipeline, which signaled first step to a

rapprochement between two states after the incident with the plane in November 2015 (Financial Times, 2016). It was argued that the failed military coup intensified tensions between Turkey and its NATO partners due to negative comments towards Erdogan's reaction after the coup, and gave an incentive to pursue cooperation with Russia further (Center Of Strategic And International Studies, 2016). In June 2016, Erdogan reportedly even wrote a letter to Putin with the official apology for shutting down the Russian plane in November 2015 (Bertrand, 2016). It is worth saying that the rapprochement is beneficial for both sides, because Russia, as well as Turkey, is going through politically sensitive period caused by a negative discourse from Russian and Turkish colleagues from the West.

Jordan

Moscow and Amman also differ in their positions on Syria. Like Turkey, Jordan was forced to care for a large number of refugees fleeing from the conflict in Syria, and also is unhappy with continued Russian support to the Assad regime. Moscow, for its part, is unhappy that the Syrian opposition receives arms via Jordan (Katz, 2013). Such a disagreement on the matter of the Syrian conflict remains rather peaceful and hasn't evolved into an open political confrontation.

Egypt

Mohammad Morsi succeeded Hosni Mubarak, who was forced to resign on 11 February 2011 as a part of the Arab Spring revolutions. The Russian government took a rather pragmatic attitude toward the Egypt's new President and his Muslim Brotherhood supporters. Although the new Egyptian government was critical of the

Assad's regime, Moscow very much appreciated Morsi's negative reaction to the foreign intervention in the Syrian conflict (Borger, 2012). Morsi visited Moscow in 2013 and had bilateral talks with the Russian President, which resulted in Putin pledging military and economic assistance to Egypt (Russia Today, 2013). Nevertheless, in July 2013, Russia supported the dismissal of Morsi by the Egyptian military and welcomed a democratically-elected President Abdel-Fattah al-Sisi (DeGhett, 2015).

As Dubovikova (2016) observes, following the deterioration of the Russia's relations with Turkey, Egypt proposed its services to supply Turkish products, primarily fruits and vegetables, to Russian markets. However, the crash of the Russian A321 airliner over the Sinai Peninsula significantly complicated the relations between two states. After the investigation, the Federal Security Service director Aleksander Bortnikov confirmed to the President Vladimir Putin that the Russian plane crash in Sinai, Egypt, was caused by the terrorist attack (Kremlin.ru, 2015).

Russia still needs Egypt as a partner in the Middle East, and Egypt, as Maria Dubovikova notes, needs Russia as a stable partner to diversify its foreign relations and reduce dependence on particular players (Dubovikova, 2016). Nevertheless, it is still not clear how the relations between two states will operate in the future.

Iran

Throughout the Arab Spring, and the Syrian conflict, in particular, Iran has been perhaps the most loyal ally of Russia (PBS, 2016). The core for that lays in common interests the two states have about Syria. Firstly, as argued by Malashenko (2015), Iran and Russia share their sympathy to Assad and want to keep him as the Syrian President in the future. Secondly, both Iran and Russia are looking to reduce the

influence of the US in the Middle East (Malashenko, 2015). Moreover, it has been agreed between scholars, that Syria and the Middle East overall have become the ground of common strategic interests between Iran and Russia (Alterman and Barnett, 2013; Geranmayeh, and Liik, 2016). For Russia, Iran also tends to be an important balancing factor in the Russia's Middle East policy.

The effects of the Arab Spring for Russia

From the beginning of the Syrian conflict, Russia plays a strategic role in unfolding the crisis. It is, however, needs to be said that for about four years since the beginning of the conflict in Syria, the Russia's position remained essentially unchanged. In particular, Russia initially called for the immediate suspension of the use of force by all sides and for a peaceful resolution of the crisis through a broad-based national dialogue, without outside interference, undue pressure, and preconditions. Although this position changed dramatically in September 2015, when Russia made a decision to launch air strikes in Syria against the Islamic State's targets. For the first time in over a quarter of a century, the Kremlin is officially conducting a high-scale military operation abroad. Therefore the operation and its targets were immediately condemned by the United States and its European allies.

Initial diplomatic efforts in support of the Assad's regime in Syria seem to be heavily influenced by the assessment of the events in Libya. Russian foreign policy decision-makers perceived Russia's abstention on the UN Security Council's resolution 1973 authorizing a no-fly zone over Libya as grossly misinterpreted by Russia's Western collegues. Quite a few scholars agree that, in the eyes of the

Russian policy-makers, the Western partners ignored the Russia's position on the situation in Libya, and decided to dismiss Gaddafi covertly (Mirovalev, 2015; Gorenburg, 2012; Bubnova, 2015). It is the author's believe that such a move, of the Western colleagues was interpreted by the Russian political establishment as an effort to undermine the Russia's authority in the Security Council and the Russia's place in the world politics. In case of Syria, it seems that Russian policy-makers have become concerned that their Western colleagues could also apply so-called 'the Libyan scenario', and decided to change their strategy in a direction, which mainly serves the Russia's interests. These interests include sustaining 'the Great power' status of Russia in the World Politics in general and in the Middle East in particular.

When it comes to the military intervention contemplated by the Russian forces in support of the Assad's rule, it seems that such recourse to armed methods has a goal to show the means Russia is ready to use in achieving its foreign policy results. It also demonstrates a capacity the Russian military forces have reached in recent years.

Russian Discourse with regards to the Arab Spring

In the Russian media and political circles, there are two types of discourse regarding the Arab Spring. According to the first one, the Arab Spring, as a phenomenon, predominantly driven by the West, and by the US in particular. Such a discourse is traced in official speeches of Russian policy-makers in relation to the situation in Syria. As it is suggested by Maxim Suchkov (2015), as well as Yulia Nikitina (2014), this discourse was mainly influenced by a series of the 'color revolutions' that took place across the post-Soviet space in the 2000s (Georgia in

2003, Ukraine in 2004). It was found by some scholars, that the key Russian military personnel, including the Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, as well as the the Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov argued that the 'color revolutions' by their nature are new forms of "aggressive war", which are wrapped in "democracy" cover (Gorenburg, 2014, p. 1; Papert, 2014, p.7).

There are, however, a few similar features in the scenarios of both the 'color revolutions' and the Arab revolutions. Firstly, geographically they took place close to the Russian borders. Secondly, the main goal of uprisings in both cases was to install pro-Western governments, which, in case of the 'color revolutions' were anti-Russian. That, in particular, provided NATO with an opportunity to expand in close proximity to the Russian border. In general, it seems that the Arab land, just like the post-Soviet space, was a playground of the great political struggle between the US and its European allies, on one side, and Russia, on the other. It is true that the Russia's position in relation to Syria has made its relations with the Arab world even more complex, and as a result weakened its position in the region (Malashenko, 2013).

According to the second discourse outlined by Suchkov (2015), the Arab revolutions were seriously prompted by the 'Islamist' groups. Such a discourse is also traced in some official speeches of Russian policy-makers in relation to the situation in Syria. It is true that there are many 'Islamist' groups taking part in the Arab Spring, however, it is important to differentiate between them. One of the most influential roles during the Arab Spring is played by the Muslim Brotherhood. Moreover, the majority of newly installed governments in the Middle East at the moment comprise of the Muslim Brothers.

'Islamist' element of the Arab Spring

The origin of the Arab Spring also mainly lay in religion, and in Islam in particular. The Arab Spring was initially motivated by a democratic movement, and a desire to transform the autocratic ruling of the Arab states into more democratic one. However, soon other forces have become involved in the conflict, in particular – the 'Islamist' groups. These groups found themselves in new governments that came to power after the regimes' changes during the Arab Spring revolutions. For that, the Arab Spring was even called 'the Islamic Spring' by some scholars (Harrison, 2013). It is important to differentiate between 'Islamic' and 'Islamist', as well as 'Islamist' and 'Radical Islamist'. 'Islamism' generally represents a distinctive form of the Muslim politics. As explained by Peter Mandaville, "the term 'Islamism' refers to forms of political theory and practice that have, as their goal, the establishment of an Islamic political order in the sense of a state whose governmental principles, institutions, and legal system derive directly from the shari'ah" (Mandaville, 2007, p. 57). As also argued by Mandaville (2007), the main obstacle comes with a differentiation between 'Islamism' or 'Mainstream Islamism' and 'Radical Islamism'. According to Mandaville (2007), they are mainly different in their ideology and methods. 'Mainstream Islamists' were generally sought to make progress toward an Islamic political order via political means (civil society, informal networking. 'Radical Islamists', as defined by Mandaville (2007), reject the contemporary system of a territorially defined sovereign nation as illegitimate and seeks to replace it with a Shari'ah-based, Muslim polity, which is usually defined as a caliphate. In doing so, 'Islamists' resource to 'Jihad' as a legitimate method for bringing about desired political change. It is worth adding though that 'Mainstream Islamists' quite often strongly and consistently condemn the methods deployed by 'Radical Islamists'.

Among 'Mainstream Islamists' group perhaps the most prominent is the Muslim Brotherhood. The Muslim Brotherhood was founded in 1928 by Hasan al-Banna, an Egyptian schoolteacher. The organization was dedicated, on the one hand, to 'spread Islamic law and morality through the region (Wickham, 2015), and on the other hand, it sought primarily to offset the corrosive effect of Westernization and secularization (Mandaville, 2007). In most Arab nations, and especially in Egypt, the Brotherhood was long known as an opposition movement critical of established strongmen leaders such as Hosni Mubarak. After the anti-Mubarak protests of the Arab Spring ended with the overthrow of the old administration, the Brotherhood organized the Freedom and Justice Party and won almost half of the lower house of parliament in January 2012.

The Syrian Muslim Brotherhood takes its birth in 1945, and in spite of common ideological background and organizational similarities, the two groups differ from one another. In many ways, that are due to different sociopolitical environments they were developed. As said by Raphael Lefevre (2013), the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood is considered more conservative than its Egyptian counterpart, and it also had more history of violent resistance to the regime. When the Arab Spring reached Syria in 2011, the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood has become an important component of the Western-backed Syrian opposition (Al Monitor, 2014), and continues to be so at present.

Perhaps the most dangerous development of the Arab Spring has become the triumph of 'Religious Extremist' groups across the Middle East. In Syria, as a culmination of the Arab Spring, these groups play one of the key roles in unfolding the crisis. These groups are discussed in details in Part 2 of this Chapter.

The events in the Middle East, and particularly in Syria, have all chances to have an impact on the Russia's domestic security. The triumph of the 'Islamist' groups in the Arab Spring has resonated with the Russian Muslim population and boosted the opposition movement within the community. As Alexey Malashenko (2013) observes, 'the victories of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and the Islamist Ennahda party in Tunisia, and participation of Islamists in a new Libya's government gave the Russian Muslims the impression these 'Islamist' elites could become the Russia's allies, although no unequivocal evidence to prove this point has not been found yet. As a result, a few political demonstrations were organised across the Russian North Caucasus. Protests in Kazan, in August 2012, called to overthrow Russian government (Malashenko, 2013). Among participants were supporters of the Hizb ut-Tahrir movement operating in the North Caucasus (Malashenko, 2013). Another protest took place in Makhachkala (Dagestan) in February 2013. The protest was mainly dedicated to showing the solidarity to Assad's opponents (Malashenko, 2013).

Economic effects of the Arab Spring

The Arab Spring also brought economic challenges to its main actors, and especially to Russia. In particular, Russian foreign policy in Syria deepens the economic crisis the country in since the end of 2014. The seizure of Crimea in March 2014 and Russian support of the pro-Russian rebels in Eastern Ukraine caused the West to impose sanctions on Russia and subsequently isolate it internationally. As a result, how argued by Kathrin Hille, the Russia's economy contracted by 4.6 percent in the second quarter compared with the same period in 2014, the largest drop in six years, marking the country's first recession since the financial crisis in 2009 (Hille, 2015). By the beginning of 2015, according to data

provided by the Business Insider, the Russian ruble fell by 17.5 percent against the dollar, inflation jumped up into double figures (The Business Insider, 2015). Unfortunately, the Russia's economic well-being is highly dependent on oil and gas prices. With the current price of oil being sometimes below $50 per barrel, it seems to be impossible to speak about any economic recovery for Russia in the nearest future. There is an opinion presented by Alexander Tabachnik, that Russia's foreign policy in Syria, and in particular the Russia's military intervention in Syria in 2015, provoke a response from the oil-producing Sunni monarchies (foremost from Saudi Arabia, which decide on the oil prices (Tabachnik, 2016). This opinion has all chances to be right, as the oil prices, according to Nasdaq Website, has not gone higher than $50 a barrel since late December 2014 (Nasdaq Crude Oil Rates). Overall, because of its foreign policy in Syria, Russia found itself in a political isolation and a deep economic crisis.

CONCLUSION

This chapter showed that for modern Russia, the Middle Eastern region represents the area of great interest on a number of reasons. In the past, however, the region was not included in the scope of Russia's primary interests; instead, Russia was mainly focused on its partners in Europe. The situation changed after the Bolsheviks took over power in Russia. It is contended that as the Soviets were constantly looking for new partners in their struggle for the Capitalist domination, the Middle Eastern states were included in the interests for a cooperation of the Soviets. In modern Russia, close interaction with the Middle East has proved to be actively supported. It is observed that for certain period in the past, the region was the scene for a competition between the US and Russia for 'the Great Power'

status, and remains so nowadays. Moreover, it is also discussed that in modern Russia, the Middle Eastern region represents the area of strategic importance, where Russia operates as a counterbalance to the West (mainly the US & its European allies). Moreover, the region also has particular economic value for Russia.

This chapter was also dedicated to the analysis of the Arab Spring, which swept the Middle Eastern region since 2010, and was mainly targeted at the regime change in all Arab states of the region. This chapter offers an analysis of Russian political discourse formed in relation to the Arab Spring. It also argues that there are two types of discourse. On the one hand, there are some, who suppose that the Arab Spring, as a phenomenon, predominantly driven by the West, and mainly by the US. Moreover, according to this discourse, a certain similar scenario is detected between the 'color revolutions' that took place across the post-Soviet space in the 2000s and the 'Arab revolutions'. On the other hand, there is a discourse that the Arab revolutions were seriously prompted by the 'Islamists' groups.

This chapter also finds that the origin of the Arab Spring also lay in the religion. In particular, the Arab Spring has become a scene for the 'Islamist' groups' activities. However, it is argued that it's important to differentiate between 'Mainstream Islamist' and 'Radical Islamist' groups, which a taking part in the Arab Spring revolutions. In this chapter, the author explains this difference in details.

Another effect of the Arab Spring was proved to be the change of the political situation in the Middle Eastern region. At the beginning of the chapter, there is a historical review of the Russian relations with selected Middle Eastern states. In the third part of the chapter, there is an analysis on how the Arab Spring revolutions changed these relations. As mentioned before, the analysis of the Russian relations

with the Middle Eastern states is limited to selected states in the Middle Eastern region. Such a choice of states is based on the author's considerations over which states are mainly involved or/and directly affected by the Arab Spring revolutions.

This chapter also represents a study on a case of Syria in the Arab Spring. In particular, it explains the reasons behind the Russian foreign policy in Syria. It also demonstrates a historical continuity in the Russia-Syria relations. It is proved that despite the Russian-Syrian relations have deep roots, they have always been complex. It is argued that Russian support to the Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has many reasons, including economic, geopolitical interests, military cooperation, however, it is proved that two factors are decisive in this case: Russia's desire to sustain its status as 'the Great Power' and the Russian domestic security implications. It is proved that the Syrian conflict is marked by the rise in terrorist activities across Russia and the Middle East. It is also stated that the 'Islamist' groups operating in the Middle East and in Syria are currently perceived by the Russian authorities as a threat to the Russian domestic security. The chapter demonstrates that these groups have members coming from Russia and post-Soviet member states, and it is quite possible for them to return home with the expertise gain abroad or inspire their compatriots for similar activities in their home countries.

CHAPTER VII. CONCLUSION

The analysis of a foreign policy position of the Russian Federation quite often leads to a number of contradictory conclusions. Many observers often criticize Russian foreign policy for being spontaneous, unpredictable, irrational and sometimes even aggressive (Carafano, 2015; Snetkov, 2015; Cox, 2014; Lucas, 2009; Mankoff, 2009). At the same time, it was agreed that it is not possible to be dismissive of such an actor of the Global Politics, like Russia. Therefore, a qualified analysis of Russian foreign policy is necessary, and there remains a strong case for achieving a better understanding of the Russian activities in the International arena.

This thesis was set out to analyze Russian foreign policy in relation to Syria. From the beginning of the conflict in 2011, Russia supported the legitimate Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad. With such a position Russia placed itself into a confrontation with the opposition forces, which are backed by the US, the EU and some other Arab states (like Saudi Arabia, Qatar). The confrontation evolved into a deep political crisis, which was further deteriorated as a result of the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

The research was informed by numerous academic sources, which the author critically evaluated during the study process. Such an evaluation helped to outline the gaps in the existing body of materials. The author noticed that the body of theoretical literature lacks a comprehensive analysis of all theoretical approaches that can be used for the Russian foreign policy research. Although certain attempts were previously made by Tsygankov (Tsygankov, 2010). This dissertation intended to fill this gap and offered a review of various theoretical approaches to the Russian foreign policy analysis and the nature of the Russian politics.

In this dissertation, the author synthesized different International Relations theories, which served to outline the conceptual framework. Overall, in the field of the International Relations, there is a division between scholars on the matter of either applying a single theory-based approach to a state's foreign policy analysis (Waltz, 1959; Morgenthau, 1948; Bull, 1977, and others), or making a choice towards a theoretical pluralism (Katzenstein and Sil (2010), Jackson and Nexon (2004), Risse and Simmons (2002), and Barkin (2010). As such a theoretical pluralism remains a rather problematic approach and is criticized by a number of scholars (Kratochwil, 2007; Lapid, 1989; Neumann). The author proved that a theoretical pluralism has a lot of limitations in its application, which quite often results in a lack of commonly agreed practice. Quite a number of academics agree that despite being challenging, a theoretical pluralism serves as an effort to overcome limitations inherent in a paradigm-bound research of the International Relations. By applying a theoretical synthesis, the author supported those scholars who use it as a methodological approach to the state's foreign policy analysis.

As a part of a theoretical synthesis, the author combined Neoclassic Realism and Constructivism. In the present study, the author explained the choice of Neoclassic Realist theory through making an analysis of the Realist theory evolution. The author found that Neoclassic Realism in many ways represents an advanced form of Realism, because it systematized all approaches of the Realist tradition, and extracted its basic insights. Moreover, Neoclassic Realism incorporated both external and internal variables into the analysis of state's foreign policy. In other words, domestic and foreign policies were proved to be connected and even dependent on one another.

When it comes to Constructivist theory, in the thesis the author addressed certain division between those scholars, who support it (Wendt 1999, Zehfuss 2002, Tsygankov 2005), and those, who rather criticize it (Kowert 2011; Guzzini 2003). In the thesis, the author contributed to those, who support the Constructivist approach, and concluded that identity is the key driver behind Russian Foreign Policy, particularly in relation to Syria.

The main limitation of the use of a theoretical pluralism was found to evolve over the question of how to reconcile different ontologies and epistemologies of diverse theoretical traditions, as well as the ways to link rather diverse theories. In this way, a theoretical synthesis is preferred over an analytic eclecticism as it allows combining different and sometimes conflicting theoretical approaches. During present research, the author noticed that those scholars who apply a theoretical pluralism into their research (Moravcsik, 1998; Laferriere & Stoett, 1999; Mutlu 2012) also prefer a theoretical synthesis to an analytic eclecticism.

The present study examined foreign policy through the scope of domestic policy. The author discovered that in the field of the International Relations, there is certain division among scholars on those who approach state's foreign policy as a result of external factors (Fox, 1959; Wolfers, 1962; Rosenau, 1966; Waltz, 1979; Handel, 1981; Walt, 1987; Mearsheimer, 2001; Galbreath, 2006), and those who see domestic policy and foreign policy as interconnected (Rose, 1998; Rathbun, 2008; Lobell, 2009; Romanova, 2012). In this research, the author followed the logic of the latter group and suggested that certain domestic developments affect foreign policy decisions, including those Russian foreign policy decisions in relation to Syria. Among those developments, the author claimed to be the effect of 'the Great Power' identity and the threat posed by the rise of 'Religious Extremism' to the Russian

national security. Speaking more generally, the author contended that Russian foreign policy in Syria is identity-based and simultaneously security-oriented. The author put these two developments of Russian domestic policy as independent from one another. At the same time, the author recognized that some researchers might suggest that identity and security are connected. The author addressed in present thesis that it can be argued that 'Religious Extremism', as one of the major domestic security threats, threatens the Russian national identity as much as it affects Russian foreign policy. Although such an assumption might be developed in a separate research paper, the author decided to build the argument on identity and security being independent developments. The author supported the argument by proving that foreign policy in Syria continued the political tradition of Russian foreign policy being identity-based and security-oriented. In other words, the author argued that there is certain historical background in such development of Russian foreign policy-making. As such this development tends to be the unique characteristic of the Russian politics. Overall, in present thesis, the author argued that history serves as a helpful tool for analyzing the nature of the Russian state, and its foreign policy.

The present study aimed to make a methodological contribution to the field of International Relations by applying a new approach to the foreign policy analysis. It is also hoped that this approach would prove useful for further researchers. Neoclassic Realism was used in this approach as a theory explaining how do Russian domestic security implications affect Russian foreign policy in Syria. Constructivist theory, on the other hand, provides explanations for the identity-based Russian foreign policy in Syria. Also, as a part of this approach, two different ontological positions of Objectivism and Constructivism were combined. With regards to epistemology, the present study rests on the Interpretivist position, as it

adopted a political discourse analysis as the method of research. The contribution of the present approach was also laid by the multi-level analysis of Russian foreign policy. This study brought together the effects of the systemic and state levels, as well as an the individual level. According to such scheme, the author argued that external political environment affects state's foreign policy on the systemic level, while the effects of domestic policies on the state's foreign policy are addressed on the state level. Particular effects on foreign policy in case of modern Russia were proved to come from its political leadership, in particular from the President and his 'inner circle'. Therefore the author proved that Russian foreign policy in Syria is also built on the individual level of analysis.

This research applied a political discourse analysis as a tool for proving the research arguments of Russian foreign policy being identity-based and simultaneously security-oriented. At the same time, the author also addressed a rather problematic nature of a discourse analysis. The author demonstrated that a number of scholars had no agreement on the terminology of a discourse and a discourse analysis (Larsen, 1997, Chernysh, 2011, Pietikäinen and Dufva, 2006, Fairclough, and Fairclough, 2013), while others were debating the matter of the application of a political discourse analysis on a foreign policy analysis (Fairclough and Fairclough, 2013; Larsen, 1997). Certain confusion also proved to exist on the matter of how to conduct a discourse analysis during a foreign policy analysis (Muller, 2010; Newman, 2008; Manheim et. al, 2012; Colin, 2004). This thesis took a challenge to reconcile those difficulties and contribute to the general knowledge of discourse analysis in the field of the International Relations.

Analysis of a political discourse in this research has proven to have a particular value, as it mirrors current tendencies of the Russian politics. In particular, current

political discourse gave an opportunity to trace certain themes, which were frequently repeated over a long period of time. Among those themes, a discourse on the Russia's 'Greatpowerness' is very common. The study showed how key figures from the contemporary Russia's political establishment have constructed a narrative of Russia as the 'Great Power' during their interviews, public statements, and speeches. Various instances of the use of specific words, phrases, and their combinations demonstrated a certain conscious process of discourse building.

The discourse on the Russia's domestic security matters, on the other hand, revealed certain attention paid on the link between the rise of 'Religious Extremism' during the Arab Spring and in Syria in particular, and the situation in the Russian Caucasus. It was found that a separate discourse was formed around the threat posed by the Islamic State for the Russia's domestic security and territorial integrity. The reasons for such a discourse were laid as a result of a number of videos and public statements made by the Islamic State's commanders, in which they openly threatened Russia as a state and the Russian President in particular.

On an initial stage of this research project, the author decided on the thesis being a qualitative research. And as a part of such research, it was considered to include interviews as one of the methods the present research. However, the author's experience of interviewing some members from the Russian Federation Embassy in London demonstrated that the insights of the interviewed diplomats repeated information to be found in published sources, including copying spoken words and phrases of the Russian officials, as well as a regular reference to official speeches. Therefore the decision was made to exclude interviews from the methodological body of this research project, as such a method would not change the general quality of the thesis.

Overall, this thesis offered a critical study on the matter of the Russian domestic security threats. At the same time, the present study was limited only to the analysis of the rising threat of 'Religious Extremism' in Russia. The author discussed 'Religious Extremism', or how it also is commonly referred to so-called 'non-tradition' form of Islam in Russia, in contrast to 'Sufism' or one of so-called 'traditional' Islamic currents in Russia. The research on 'Sufism' demonstrated a problematic and quite complicated nature of this form of Islam in Russia. The author discovered that in Russia 'Sufism' has quite a long history, however, there is still certain division among scholars on the matter of the exact period when 'Sufism' appeared in Russia. The author also discovered that 'Sufism' is represented by three brotherhoods or '*tariqas*': 'Naqshbanaya', 'Qadiriya', and 'Shaziliya', although in Russia it is mainly represented by 'Naqshbanaya' and 'Qadiriya' brotherhoods. The author found that historically 'Naqshbanaya', 'Qadiriya' brotherhoods were quite often confronting each other. Although the confrontation has become one of the key factors in the reconciliation of the Russian-Chechen war.

The author also discovered that generally 'Sufism' is divided into four schools: 'Hanafism', 'Hanabalism', 'Shafiism' and 'Malikism'. As the author observed, in Russia, so-called 'traditional' Islam is represented by 'Hanafi' school of 'Sufism'. Moreover, the author also found that 'Hanafism' is considered to be the position of the official Russian Muslim clergy, including the Central Spiritual Board of Muslims of Russia and European Countries of the CIS and the Russian Council of Muftis.

In present study on so-called 'non-traditional' Islam in Russia, the author reconciled certain confusion on the matter of differentiating between different Islamic currents, and in particular their so-called 'extreme' forms. Such a study contributed to a better understanding of Islam in Russia. The author also contended that 'Religious

Extremism' in Russia has an international dimension in a way that the Global 'Islamist' network is closely connected to the 'Islamists' in Russia. The Russian 'Islamists' have proved to receive material and ideological support from their coreligionists in the Middle East. In the present thesis, the author proved that such a tendency forms the particular threat for the Russian domestic security and territorial integrity. As such, the thesis also presented particular value for those who contemplate the security study in relation to Russia, as well as analyze Islam in Russia.

The author discussed 'Religious Extremism' as the matter that bridges the Middle East with the Russian Caucasus. Any developments in the Middle Eastern region proved to affect Russia and its Muslim-populated regions (mainly the North Caucasus) through the 'Islamists' activities. The author contended that the situation in the Russian Caucasus remains quite vulnerable. Moreover, the region suffers from quite regular terrorist attacks, which are often targeted against the representatives of 'Sufi' Islam in Russia. In many ways, normalization of the security situation in Chechnya and in the Russian Caucasus, in general, was trusted to the current Head of the Chechen Republic - Ramzan Kadyrov. Kadyrov forms part of 'the inner circle' of Vladimir Putin and proved to be very loyal to the President. At the same time, the author argued that the figure of Ramzan Kadyrov remains quite problematic due to his militant background, and more recently, due to growing 'cult of his personality' in the region and among the Muslims across Russia.

This thesis also explained the complex phenomenon of the Russian identity. As such, the study on this matter contributed to better understanding of the Russian foreign policy and a political discourse. Moreover, this research also contributed to an existing body of work on the Russian identity. The author offered a research of

the Russian national identity through some characteristics of the identity concept, namely history, geography, culture, religion, and the people. The author discovered that each of these components historically has been essential parts of the Russian identity, and all together continue to form its parts in modern time. The author also made a contribution to the research previously made by Prizel (1998), Tolz (2004); Trenin (1996) and Tsygankov (2012) on the nature of the Russian national identity. In the present research, the author put together all findings with those offered by Ponsard (2006), who suggested analyzing the Russian national identity through the scope of some key characteristics of the identity concept, namely history, geography, ethnicity, culture, and religion. The author also added to this list the Russian economy, and in particular, the Russian energy sector. In this regard, this thesis is limited to presenting energy as a part of the Russian national identity, rather than a separate variable.

In present dissertation, the author also paid particular attention to the role of the political leadership in Russia, because, with a support of the evidence base the author was able to find during the research process. The author argued that in the Russian history there has always been the ruler's cult and a continuous tradition of autocracy. The author suggested that Vladimir Putin in many ways took over such a tradition. The author discovered that in the eyes of many Russians, Putin is seen as a powerful leader, who is pursuing an independent and sovereign foreign policy and acts at best interests of their country. At the same time, the author noticed that such an image of Putin was carefully created by the Kremlin with a particular purpose to gain supporters among the population. By this, the author explained the reasons why Vladimir Putin enjoys almost the absolute support from the Russian people at the moment.

In this thesis, the author also contended that rebuilding of the 'Great Power' identity tends to form part of the ideology of 'exceptionalism' in today's Russia. This ideology is actively pursued by the current political establishment in Russia through their political discourse, and will likely to be sustained in the future.

This study also added to the general knowledge on Russia's relations with Middle Eastern states. The author discovered that historically, Russia avoided states of the Middle Eastern region as potential partners for cooperation. That was mainly due to lack of common interests between the states. In further years, however, and especially during the Soviet time, the states, which had put themselves as followers of the Communist ideology, became the Soviet Union's close allies. At certain periods of the Soviet rule, the Russia's authority in particular Middle Eastern states was rather high. That, however, changed after 1991, as one of the consequences of the Soviet Union's demise. Modern Russia was forced to find alternative means for cooperation with the states in the region. The author also interrogated how Russia's relations with the Middle Eastern states have changed during the Arab Spring revolutions.

The findings of this study, in general, offered an important alternative to the frequent readings of the Russian foreign policy as contradictory, irrational and unpredictable. In this thesis, the author argued that, when contemplating the Russian foreign policy analysis, we need to pay attention to the Russian domestic matters, the Russian history, and understand the political traditions, culture and the Russian identity. The discursive element of this study also matters because it addresses recent tendencies and developments of the Russian politics. Having considered all these matters, the author hopes that the present study contributed to the general

knowledge of Russian foreign policy and offered a qualified in-depth analysis of Russian foreign policy for the future researchers.

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APPENDIX 1. Content analysis of "Russia at The Turn of The Millenium" Statement by Vladimir Putin on December 30, 1999

RUSSIA AT THE TURN OF THE MILLENNIUM

(Vladimir Putin, December 30, 1999)

The humankind lives under the sign of two signal events: the new millennium and the 2000th anniversary of Christianity. I think the general interest for and attention to these two events mean something more than just the tradition to celebrate red-letter dates.

New Possibilities, New Problems

It may be a coincidence - but then, it may be not - that the beginning of the new millennium coincided with a dramatic turn in world developments in the past 20-30 years. I mean the deep and quick changes in the life of humankind connected with the development of what we call the post-industrial society. Here are its main features.

* Changes in the economic structure of society, with the diminishing weight of material production and the growing share of secondary and tertiary sectors.

* The consistent renewal and quick introduction of novel technologies and the growing output of science-intensive commodities.

* The landslide development of the information science and telecommunications.

* Priority attention to management and the improvement of the system of organisation and guidance of all spheres of human endeavour.

* And lastly, human leadership. It is man and high standards of his education, professional training, business and social activity that are becoming the guiding force of progress today.

The development of a new type of society is a sufficiently lengthy process for the careful politicians, statesmen, scientists and all those who can use their brains to notice two elements of concern in this process.

The first is that changes bring not only new possibilities to improve life, but also new problems and dangers. They were initially and most clearly revealed in the ecological sphere. But other, and acute, problems were soon detected in all other spheres of social life. Even the most economically advanced states are not free from organised crime, growing cruelty and violence, alcoholism and drug addiction, the weakening durability and educational role of the family, and the like.

And the other alarming element is that far from all countries can use the boons of modern economy and the new standards of prosperity offered by it. The quick progress of science, technologies and advanced economy is underway in only a small number of states, populated by the so-called golden billion. Quite a few other countries reached new economic and social development standards in this outgoing century. But it cannot be said that they joined the process of creating a post-industrial society. Most of them are still far away from the mere approaches to it. And there are grounds to believe that this gap will persist for quite some time yet.

This is probably why the humankind is peering into the future with both hope and fear at the turn of the new millennium.

Modern Situation in Russia

It would not be exaggeration to say that this feeling of hope and fear is expressed especially graphically in Russia. For there are few states in the world which faced so many trials as Russia in the 20th century.

First, Russia is not a state symbolising top standards of economic and social development now. And second, it is facing difficult economic and social problems.

Its GDP nearly halved in the 1990s, and its GNP is ten times smaller than in the USA and five times smaller than in China. After the 1998 crisis, the per capita GDP dropped to roughly 3,500 dollars, which is roughly five times smaller than the average indicator for the G7 states.

The structure of the Russian economy changed, with the key positions held by the fuel industry, power engineering, and the ferrous and non-ferrous metallurgy. They account for some 15% of the GDP, 50% of the overall industrial output, and over 70% of exports.

Productivity in the real economy sector is extremely low. It rose to well nigh the world average in the production of raw materials and electricity, but is 20-24% of the US average in the other industries.

The technical and technological standards of finished commodities largely depend on the share of equipment that is less than five years old. It dwindled from 29% in 1990 to 4.5% in 1998. Over 70% of our machinery and equipment are over ten years old, which is more than two times the figure in the economically developed countries.

This is the result of the consistently dwindling national investments, above all to the real economy sector. And foreign investors are not in a hurry to contribute to the

development of Russian industries. The overall volume of direct foreign investments in Russia amounts to barely 11.5 billion dollars. China received as much as 43 billion dollars in foreign investments. Russia has been reducing allocations on R&D, while the 300 largest transnational companies provided 216 billion dollars on R&D in 1997, and some 240 billion dollars in 1998. Only 5% of Russian enterprises are engaged in innovative production, whose scale is extremely low.

The lack of capital investments and insufficient attitude to innovations resulted in a dramatic fall in the production of commodities that are world competitive in terms of price-quality ratio. Foreign rivals have pushed Russia especially far back on the market of science-intensive civilian commodities. Russia accounts for less than 1% of such commodities on the world market, while the USA provides 36% and Japan, 30% of them.

The real incomes of the population have been falling since the beginning of the reforms. The deepest fall was registered after the August 1998 crisis, and it will be impossible to restore the pre-crisis living standards this year. The overall monetary incomes of the population, calculated by the UN methods, add up to less than 10% of the US figure. Health and the average life span, the indicators that determine the quality of life, deteriorated, too.

The current dramatic economic and social situation in the country is the price, which we have to pay for the economy we inherited from the Soviet Union. But then, what else could we inherit? We had to install market elements into a system based on completely different standards, with a bulky and distorted structure. And this was bound to affect the progress of the reforms. We had to pay for the excessive focus of the Soviet economy on the development of the raw materials sector and defence

industries, which negatively affected the development of consumer production and services. We are paying for the Soviet neglect of such key sectors as information science, electronics and communications. For the absence of competition between producers and industries, which hindered scientific and technological progress and made Russian economy non-competitive on the world markets. This is our payment for the brakes, and even a ban, put on the initiative and enterprise of enterprises and their personnel. And today we are reaping the bitter fruit, both material and mental, of the past decades.

On the other hand, we could have avoided certain problems in this renewal process. They are the result of our own mistakes, miscalculation and lack of experience. And yet, we could not have avoided the main problems facing Russian society. The way to the market and democracy was difficult for all states that entered it in the 1990s. They all had roughly the same problems, although in varying degrees.

Russia is completing the first, transition stage of economic and political reforms. Despite problems and mistakes, it has entered the highway by which the whole of humanity is travelling. Only this way offers the possibility of dynamic economic growth and higher living standards, as the world experience convincingly shows. There is no alternative to it.

The question for Russia now is what to do next. How can we make the new, market mechanisms work to full capacity? How can we overcome the still deep ideological and political split in society? What strategic goals can consolidate Russian society? What place can Russia occupy in the international community in the 21st century? What economic, social and cultural frontiers do we want to attain in 10-15 years? What are our strong and weak points? And what material and spiritual resources do we have now?

These are the questions put forward by life itself. Unless we find clear answers to them which would be understandable to all the people, we will be unable to move forward at the pace and to the goals which are worthy of our great country.

The Lessons Russia to Learn

The answers to these questions and our very future depend on what lessons we will learn from our past and present. This is a work for society as a whole and for more than one year, but some of these lessons are already clear.

1. For almost three-fourths of the outgoing century Russia lived under the sign of the implementation of the communist doctrine. It would be a mistake not to see and, even more so, to deny the unquestionable achievements of those times. But it would be an even bigger mistake not to realise the outrageous price our country and its people had to pay for that Bolshevist experiment. What is more, /it would be a mistake/ not to understand its historic futility. Communism and the power of Soviets did not make Russia a prosperous country with a dynamically developing society and free people. Communism vividly demonstrated its inaptitude for sound self-development, dooming our country to a steady lag behind economically advanced countries. It was a road to a blind alley, which is far away from the mainstream of civilisation.

2. Russia has used up its limit for political and socio-economic upheavals, cataclysms and radical reforms. Only fanatics or political forces which are absolutely apathetic and indifferent to Russia and its people can make calls to a

new revolution. Be it under communist, national-patriotic or radical-liberal slogans, our country, our people will not withstand a new radical break-up. The nation's tolerance and ability both to survive and to continue creative endeavour has reached the limit: society will simply collapse economically, politically, psychologically and morally.

Responsible socio-political forces ought to offer the nation a strategy of Russia's revival and prosperity based on all the positive that has been accumulated over the period of market and democratic reforms and implemented only by evolutionary, gradual and prudent methods. This strategy should be carried out in a situation of political stability and should not lead to a deterioration of the life of the Russian people, of any of its sections and groups. This indisputable condition stems from the present situation of our country.

3. The experience of the 90s vividly shows that our country's genuine renewal without any excessive costs cannot be assured by a mere experimentation in Russian conditions with abstract models and schemes taken from foreign text-books. The mechanical copying of other nations' experience will not guarantee success, either.

Every country, Russia included, has to search for its own way of renewal. We have not been very successful in this respect thus far. Only in the past year or the past two years we have started groping for our road and our model of transformation. We can pin hopes for a worthy future only if we prove capable of combining the universal principles of a market economy and democracy with Russian realities.

It is precisely with this aim in view that our scientists, analysts, experts, public servants at all levels and political and public organisations should work.

A Chance for a Worthy Future

Such are the main lessons of the outgoing century. They make it possible to outline the contours of a long-tern strategy which is to enable us, within a comparatively short time, by historic standards, to overcome the present protracted crisis and create conditions for our country's fast and stable economic and social headway. The paramount word is "fast", as we have no time for a slow start.

I want to quote the calculations made by experts. It will take us approximately fifteen years and an annual growth of our Gross Domestic Product by 8 percent a year to reach the per capita GDP level of present-day Portugal or Spain, which are not among the world's industrialised leaders. If during the same fifteen years we manage to ensure the annual growth of our GDP by 10 percent, we will then catch up with Britain or France.

Even if we suppose that these tallies are not quite accurate, our current economic lagging behind is not that serious and we can overcome it faster, it will still require many years of work. That is why we should formulate our long-term strategy and start fulfilling it as soon as possible.

We have already made the first step in this direction. The Strategic Research Centre created on the initiative and with the most active participation of the Government began its work in the end of December. This Centre is to put together the best minds of our country to draft recommendations for the government and proposals and theoretical and applied projects which are to help elaborate the strategy itself and the more effective ways of tackling the tasks which will come up in the process of its implementation.

I am convinced that ensuring the necessary growth dynamics is not only an economic problem. It is also a political and, in a certain sense, - I am not afraid to use this word - ideological problem. To be more precise, it is an ideological, spiritual and moral problem. It seems to me that the latter is of particular importance at the current stage from the standpoint of ensuring the unity of Russian society.

 (A) Russian Idea

Fruitful and creative work which our country needs so badly today is impossible in a split and internally disintegrated society, a society where the main social sections and political forces have different basic values and fundamental ideological orientations.

Twice in the outgoing century has Russia found itself in such a state: After October 1917 and in the 90s.

In the first case, civil accord and unity of society were achieved not so much by what was then called "ideological- educational work" as by power methods. Those who disagreed with the ideology and policy of the regime were subjected to different forms of persecution up to repression.

As a matter of fact, this is why I think that the term "state ideology" advocated by some politicians, publicists and scholars is not quite appropriate. It creates certain associations with our recent past. Where there is a state ideology blessed and supported by the state, there is, strictly speaking, practically no room for intellectual and spiritual freedom, ideological pluralism and freedom of the press, that is, for political freedom.

I am against the restoration of an official state ideology in Russia in any form. There should be no forced civil accord in a democratic Russia. Social accord can only be voluntary.

That is why it is so important to achieve social accord on such basic issues as the aims, values and orientations of development, which would be desirable for and attractive to the overwhelming majority of Russians. The absence of civil accord and unity is one of the reasons why our reforms are so slow and painful. Most of the strength is spent on political squabbling, instead of the handling of the concrete tasks of Russia's renewal.

Nonetheless, there have appeared some positive changes in this sphere in the past year or a year and a half. The bulk of Russians show more wisdom and responsibility than many politicians. Russians want stability, confidence in the future and possibility to plan it for themselves and for their children not for a month but for years and even decades to come. They want to work in a situation of peace, security and a sound law-based order. They wish to use the opportunities and prospects opened by the diversity of the forms of ownership, free enterprise and market relations.

It is on this basis that our people have begun to perceive and accept supra-national universal values which are above social, group or ethnic interests. Our people have accepted such values as freedom of expression, freedom to travel abroad and other fundamental political rights and human liberties. People value that they can have property, be engaged in free enterprise, and build up their own wealth, and so on, and so forth.

Another foothold for the unity of Russian society is what can be called the traditional values of Russians. These values are clearly seen today. Patriotism. This term is

sometimes used ironically and even derogatively. But for the majority of Russians it has its own and only original and positive meaning. It is a feeling of pride in one's country, its history and accomplishments. It is the striving to make one's country better, richer, stronger and happier. When these sentiments are free from the tints of nationalist conceit and imperial ambitions, there is nothing reprehensible or bigotedly about them. Patriotism is a source of the courage, staunchness and strength of our people. If we lose patriotism and national pride and dignity, which are connected with it, we will lose ourselves as a nation capable of great achievements.

Belief in the greatness of Russia. Russia was and will remain a great power. It is preconditioned by the inseparable characteristics of its geopolitical, economic and cultural existence. They determined the mentality of Russians and the policy of the government throughout the history of Russia and they cannot but do so at present.

But Russian mentality should be expanded by new ideas. In the present world the might of a country as a great power is manifested more in its ability to be the leader in creating and using advanced technologies, ensuring a high level of people's wellbeing, reliably protecting its security and upholding its national interests in the international arena, than in its military strength.

Statism. It will not happen soon, if it ever happens at all, that Russia will become the second edition of, say, the US or Britain in which liberal values have deep historic traditions. Our state and its institutes and structures have always played an exceptionally important role in the life of the country and its people. For Russians a strong state is not an anomaly which should be got rid of. Quite the contrary, they

see it as a source and guarantor of order and the initiator and main driving force of any change.

Modern Russian society does not identify a strong and effective state with a totalitarian state. We have come to value the benefits of democracy, a law-based state, and personal and political freedom. At the same time, people are alarmed by the obvious weakening of state power. The public looks forward to the restoration of the guiding and regulating role of the state to a degree which is necessary, proceeding from the traditions and present state of the country.

Social Solidarity. It is a fact that a striving for corporative forms of activity has always prevailed over individualism. Paternalistic sentiments have struck deep roots in Russian society. The majority of Russians are used to connect improvements in their own condition more with the aid and support of the state and society than with their own efforts, initiative and flair for business. And it will take a long time for this habit to die.

Do not let us try to answer the question whether it is good or bad. The important thing is that such sentiments exist. What is more, they still prevail. That is why they cannot be ignored. This should be taken into consideration in the social policy, first and foremost.

I suppose that the new Russian idea will come about as an alloy or an organic unification of universal general humanitarian values with traditional Russian values which have stood the test of the times, including the test of the turbulent 20th century.

This vitally important process must not be accelerated, discontinued and destroyed. It is important to prevent that the first shoots of civil accord be crushed underfoot in the heat of political campaigns, of some or other elections.

The results of the recent elections to the State Duma inspire great optimism in this respect. They reflected the turn towards stability and civil accord, which is being completed in our society. The overwhelming majority of Russians said No to radicalism, extremism and the opposition with a revolutionary tint. It is probably the first time since the reforms have begun that such favourable conditions have been created for constructive cooperation between the executive and legislative branches of power.

Serious politicians whose parties and movements are represented in the new State Duma, are advised to draw conclusions from this fact. I am positive that the feeling of responsibility for the destinies of the nation will have the upper hand, and Russian parties, organizations and movements and their leaders will not sacrifice the common interests of and prospects in store for Russia, which call for a solidary effort of all healthy forces, to the narrow partisan and time-serving considerations.

 (B) Strong State

We are at a stage where even the most correct economic and social policy starts misfiring while being realised due to the weakness of the state power, of the managerial bodies. A key to Russia's recovery and growth is in the state-policy sphere today.

Russia needs a strong state power and must have it. I am not calling for totalitarianism. History proves all dictatorships, all authoritarian forms of government are transient. Only democratic systems are intransient. Whatever the shortcomings, mankind has not devised anything superior. A strong state power in Russia is a democratic, law-based, workable federative state.

I see the following directions of its formation:

- a streamlined structure of the bodies of state authority and management, higher professionalism, more discipline and responsibility of civil servants, keener struggle against corruption;

- a restructuring of the state personnel policy on the basis of a selection of the best staffs;

- creating conditions beneficial for the rise in the country of a full-blooded civil society to balance out and monitor the authorities;

- a larger role and higher authority of the judiciary;

- improved federative relations, including in the sphere of budgets and finances; and

- an active offensive on crime.

Amending the Constitution does not seem to be an urgent, priority task. What we have is a good Constitution. Its provisions dealing with the individual rights and freedoms are seen as the best Constitutional instrument of its kind in the world. It is a serious task, indeed, to make the current Constitution and the laws made on the basis thereof, the norm of life of the state, society and every individual, rather than draft a new Basic Law for the country.

The Constitutional nature of laws in the making is a major problem in this respect. Russia currently operates over a thousand federal laws and several thousand laws of the republics, territories, regions and autonomous areas. Not all of them

correspond to the above criterion. If the justice ministry, the prosecutor's office and the judiciary continue to be as slow in dealing with this matter as they are today, the mass of questionable or simply un-Constitutional laws may become critical legally and politically. The Constitutional safety of the state, the federal Centre's capabilities, the country's manageability and Russia's integrity would then be in jeopardy.

Another serious problem is inherent in that tier of authority which the government belongs to. The global experience prompts the conclusion that the main threat to human rights and freedoms, to democracy as such emanates from the executive authority. Of course, a legislature which makes bad laws also does its bit. But the main threat emanates from the executive authority. It organises the country's life, applies laws and can objectively distort, substantively and not always maliciously, these laws by making executive orders.

The global trend is that of a stronger executive authority. Not surprisingly, society endeavours to better control it in order to preclude arbitrariness and misuses of office. This is why I, personally, am paying priority attention to building partner relations between the executive authority and civil society, to developing the institutes and structures of the latter, and to waging an active and tough onslaught on corruption.

 (C) Efficient Economy

I have already said that the reform years have generated a heap of problems that have accumulated in the national economy and social sphere. The situation is complex, indeed. But, to put it mildly, it is too early to bury Russia a great power. All

troubles notwithstanding, we have preserved our intellectual potentiality and human resources. A number of R&D advances, advanced technologies have not been wasted. We still have our natural resources. So the country has a worthy future in store for it.

At the same time, we must learn the lessons of the 1990s and ponder the experience of market transformations.

1. I see one of the main lessons in that throughout these years we have been groping in the dark without having a clear understanding of national objectives and advances which would ensure Russia's standing as a developed, prosperous and great country of the world. The lack of a long-range development strategy for the next 15-20 and more years, is badly felt in the economy.

The government firmly intends to build its activity on the basis of the principle of unity of the strategy and tactics. Without it, we are doomed to close holes and operate in the mode of fire-fighting. Serious politics, big business are done differently. The country needs a long-term national strategy of development. I have already said that the government has started devising it.

2. Another important lesson of the 1990s is the conclusion that Russia needs to form a wholesome system of state regulation of the economy and social sphere.

I do not mean to return to a system of planning and managing the economy by fiat, where the all-pervasive state was regulating all aspects of any factory's work from top to bottom. I mean to make the Russian state an efficient coordinator of the country's economic and social forces that balances out their interests, optimises the

aims and parameters of social development and creates conditions and mechanisms of their attainment.

The above naturally exceeds the commonplace formula which limits the state's role in the economy to devising rules of the game and controlling their observance. With time, we are likely to evolve to this formula. But today's situation necessitates deeper state involvement in the social and economic processes. While setting the scale and planning mechanisms for the system of state regulation, we must be guided by the principle: The state must be where and as needed; freedom must be where and as required.

3. The third lesson is the transition to a reform strategy that would be best suited for our conditions. It should proceed in the following directions.

3.1. To encourage a dynamic economic growth. The first to come here should be the encouragement of investments. We have not yet resolved this problem. Investments into the real economy sector fell by 5 times in the 1990s, including by 3.5 times into fixed assets. The material foundations of the Russian economy are being undermined.

We call for pursuing an investment policy that would combine purely market mechanisms with measures of state guidance.

At the same time, we will continue working to create an investment climate attractive to foreign investors. Frankly speaking, the rise would be long and painful without foreign capital. But we have no time for this. Consequently, we must do our best to attract foreign capital to the country.

3.2. To pursue an energetic industrial policy. The future of the country, the quality of the Russian economy in the 21st century will depend above all on progress in the spheres that are based on high technologies and produce science-intensive commodities. For 90% of economic growth is ensured today by the introduction of new achievements and technologies. The government is prepared to pursue an economic policy of priority development of industries that lead in the sphere of research and technological progress. The requisite measures include:

 - assist the development of extra-budgetary internal demand for advanced technologies and science-intensive products, and support export-oriented high-tech productions;

 - support non-raw materials industries working mostly to satisfy internal demand;

 - buttress the export possibilities of the fuel and energy and raw-materials complexes.

We should use the mechanisms, which have long been used in the world, to mobilise the funds necessary for pursuing this policy. The most important of them are the target-oriented loan and tax instruments and the provision of privileges against state guarantees.

3.3. To carry out a rational structural policy. The government thinks that like in other industrialised countries, there is a place in the Russian economy for the financial-industrial groups, corporations, small and medium businesses. Any attempts to slow down the development of some, and artificially encourage the development of other economic forms would only hinder the rise of the national economy. The policy of

the Government will be spearheaded at creating a structure that would ensure an optimal balance of all economic forms of management.

Another major sphere is the rational regulation of the operation of natural monopolies. This is a key question, as they largely determine the structure of production and consumer prices. And hence they influence both the economic and financial processes, and the dynamics of the people's incomes.

3.4. To create an effective financial system. This is a challenging task, which includes the following directions:

- to raise the effectiveness of the budget as a major instrument of the economic policy of the state;

- to carry out a tax reform;

- to get rid of non-payments, barter and other pseudo-monetary forms of settlement;

- to maintain a low inflation rate and stability of the rouble;

- to create civilised financial and stock markets, and turn them into an instrument of accumulating investment resources;

- to restructure the bank system.

3.5. To combat the shadow economy and organised crime in the economic and financial-credit sphere. All countries have shadow economies. But their share in the GDP does not exceed 15-20% in industrialised countries, while the figure for Russia is 40%. To resolve this painful problem, we should not just raise the effectiveness of

the law-enforcement agencies, but also strengthen the license, tax, hard currency and export control.

3.6. To consistently integrate the Russian economy into world economic structures. Otherwise we would not rise to the high level of economic and social progress that has been attained in the industrialised countries. The main directions of this work are:

- to ensure an active support of the state to the foreign economic operation of Russian enterprises, companies and corporations. In particular, the time is ripe for creating a federal agency to support exports, which would provide guarantees to the export contracts of Russian producers;

- to resolutely combat the discrimination of Russia on the world markets of commodities, services and investments, and to approve and apply a national anti-dumping legislation;

- to incorporate Russia into the international system of regulating foreign economic operation, above all the WTO.

3.7. To pursue a modern agrarian policy. The revival of Russia will be impossible without the revival of the countryside and agriculture. We need an agrarian policy that would organically combine measures of state assistance and state regulation with the market reforms in the countryside and in land ownership relations.

4. We must admit that virtually all changes and measures entailing a fall in the living conditions of the people are inadmissible in Russia. We have come to a line beyond which we must not go.

Poverty has reached a mind-boggling scale in Russia. In early 1998, the average-weighted world per capita income amounted to some 5,000 dollars a year, but it was only 2,200 dollars in Russia. And it dropped still lower after the August 1998 crisis. The share of wages in the GDP dropped from 50% to 30% since the beginning of reforms.

This is the most acute social problem. The Government is elaborating a new income policy designed to ensure a stable growth of prosperity on the basis of the growth of real disposable incomes of the people.

Despite these difficulties, the Government is resolved to take new measures to support science, education, culture and health care. For a country where the people are not healthy physically and psychologically, are poorly educated and illiterate, will never rise to the summits of world civilisation.

Russia is in the midst of one of the most difficult periods in its history. For the first time in the past 200-300 years, it is facing a real threat of sliding to the second, and possibly even third, echelon of world states. We are running of time left for removing this threat. We must strain all intellectual, physical and moral forces of the nation. We need coordinated creative work. Nobody will do it for us.

Everything depends on us, and us alone. On our ability to see the size of the threat, to pool forces and set our minds to hard and lengthy work.